DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Supplement

DUNGEONSCAPE™

An Essential Guide to Dungeon Adventuring

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Introduction

"Can you see anything?" called out Regdar, squinting in the smoky light of his guttering torch.

"Be quiet!" hissed Lidda, several paces ahead. She crouched in the shadows by the darkened opening and cocked her head this way and that, like a robin listening for crawling worms. "I think it's safe. I'm just going to go in a few—"

A high-pitched shriek cut briefly through the dank passages, followed by an ominous clanking sound. Then came an even more disquieting, swishing noise.

"Lidda? Are you all right?" Soveliss crept forward, scanning the floor and walls ahead as he did so. "The rest of you, keep back."

The ranger moved carefully to the entrance and brought his torch forward to peer inside. He beheld a long hall, a door at its far end, but his attention was more immediately drawn to the dozen swinging blades whose arcs crisscrossed the chamber, dicing it into neat five-foot cubes.

"Over here!" Lidda's voice was uncharacteristically shaky. "I'm okay. But I've got a bit of a problem."

The halfling clung to a pendulum blade near the center of the room. Had not the situation been so dire, she might have resembled a child on a swing. Instead, her face was pale, and she gripped the shaft in panic.

"Take it easy. We'll find some way to get you out of there." Soveliss began scanning the entrance and the inside walls on either side, as much as he dared without putting any part of his body at risk of contact with the razor-sharp blades.

"Maybe we could time their swings and run through," suggested Regdar.

"Nice thought, big fellow," came Lidda's voice. "But these things are set to slice and dice—I've been watching for a while, and I can't see a way to get past all of them. Whoever built this took that old trick into account. Wait for one to pass, and another swings right through where you're standing."

"I'm not seeing any triggering devices around the entrance," said Soveliss.

"I'm pretty sure I set something off near the middle. And no smart comments. It had to be pretty well hidden to get by me." There was silence for a moment. "Hey—what's this?"

"Did you find something?" Regdar asked as he moved up to the entranceway.

"Yeah. This is weird. There's a key fastened to this blade. I wonder . . ."

"Well, the key has to have something to do with getting through. But what's it for? I don't see any keyholes over here."

"So maybe it's over there." With some difficulty, Lidda released an arm and indicated the far door. "Want to bet it opens that?"

"Say you're right," retorted Regdar. "How are we supposed to get there? You said yourself we can't get through."

"I believe I might have the means to test this idea." Mialee's quiet, musical voice joined the conversation for the first time. "Please hold that key up where I can see it, Lidda. Regdar, kindly toss your torch into the room so I can see better."

The elf wizard raised one elegant finger and pointed it. The heavy brass key tugged free from Lidda's fingers and began to floar toward the opposite end of the room. Mialee concentrated, straining to see by the weak light, and with a quiet "snick," the key slid into a hole in the door's center. It turned once, and the deadly blades withdrew into the slots spaced along the room's walls. Lidda quickly somersaulted away from her retracting scythe and landed lightly beside the far door.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Let's go!"

No more important adventure settings exist than dungeons. After all, the word itself is half the name of the Dungeons & Dragons® game. No other environment has been the setting for so many famous roleplaying adventures: The halls of Moria, the mummy's tomb, King Solomon's Mines—such exciting locales were part of the fantasy genre even before the birth of D&D.

Filled with dangerous monsters, bizarre traps, and unimaginable wealth, the dungeon is the ultimate challenge for the intrepid adventurer. It need not explain or justify its existence. It simply . . . is. Here, you won't deal with mundane problems: no needy farmers, grasping merchants, or corrupt local politicians. Expect only the unexpected.

For players, the first three chapters of this book offer tips that help PCs thrive in a dungeon environment. Here you will find new class options to make you a better delver, prestige classes, feats, teamwork benefits, spells, and useful dungeoneering gear. You'll get a taste of the strange and wonderful things a dungeon can offer, along with hints to better deal with whatever you encounter.

The only challenge greater than surviving a deadly dungeon is designing one. The remainder of this book contains advice for the Dungeon Master, as well as a host of new options and strategies for designing a compelling and challenging dungeon: design guidelines, new monsters and hazards, expanded rules for exciting traps, ideas for wondrous terrain and materials, and details and finishing touches to breathe life into your dungeons.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Dungeonscape makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks: the *Player's Handbook* (PH), the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG), and the *Monster Manual* (MM). It also makes a number of references to recent supplements, particularly *Dungeon Master's Guide II* (DMG2) and Player's Handbook II (PH2). Even though those supplements contain a good deal of useful information concerning dungeons, they are not needed to use this book. *Dungeonscape* also draws upon the information contained in all the D&D supplements published since 2000, and a few sources from older editions of the game. Although you might find these resources helpful, they are not necessary.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DUNGEON AS ENEMY

Illus. by R. Horsley

A claustrophobic, dark corridor. Unnerving sounds in the distance. The hot breath that washes across the back of your neck as a lurking creature moves in for the kill. These are some of first sensations you might feel as you enter a dungeon. Ahead you'll find bizarre monsters, deadly traps, labyrinthine corridors, and—if you survive—tremendous rewards.

The excitement, atmosphere, and unique nature of dungeons make them popular destinations for D&D adventurers. Dungeons can vary greatly in construction and size, but they share a few common elements. Dungeons are isolated—it's not a simple matter to hop back on the road and head to town. Adventurers have few opportunities to deviate from the choices offered by the dungeon's layout, so they lose some ability to improvise. Consequently, preparation is key to a successful dungeon expedition; no party that fails to bring the proper gear (and sufficient healing) gets far.

Dungeons also present a variety of obstacles. One room might contain a poison-arrow trap to disarm, another a ravenous otyugh to slay or bribe, and a third a dark river to be crossed. Each class and character build is strongest against different challenges, so a balanced party is essential. Yet despite your best guesses and preparation, you will still encounter many unexpected situations. Your best weapons in a dungeon are intuition, awareness, and strategy.

DUNGEON CHALLENGES

Every corner you turn and every door you open presents a new potential danger in a dungeon. If you understand this before you enter, you'll have an advantage once inside.

PREPARATION

A delve starts long before you arrive at the dungeon. Proper planning can save you from trouble later on.

Gear

Your party will be away from society for the duration of the dungeon delve, so you need a comprehensive collection of supplies.

Climbing Gear: High walls or cliffs, deep pits, and steep passages are common dungeon obstacles. An abundance of rope is always useful and can be complemented with a grappling hook and climber's kit.

Food: Finding anything edible in a dungeon can be tricky. Invest in more trail rations than you think you'll need, and don't forget a waterskin. Higher-level characters can invest in magic items that create food, such as *everlasting rations* (*Heroes of Battle* 131) or *Murlynd's spoon* (*DMG* 262). *Create water* and *create food and water* spells can also provide the nourishment you need, and, at higher levels, *heroes' feast* replenishes a party and provides combat bonuses.

Light: Since dungeons are often lightless underground complexes, a torch or lantern is always useful. However, alternative light sources such as lanterns, sunrods, *everburning torches*, and *light* spells, take up less space and are easier to manage—especially when a fight breaks out.

Camping Gear: Even if a dungeon has hewn stone walls, solid floors, and secure rooms, it still isn't hospitable. Bedrolls and blankets can make a night in a dungeon less uncomfortable; if you can readily transport it, firewood can provide some much-needed warmth and light. If you can't find a room with a door to block, the spell *Leomund's secure shelter* can provide a measure of safety against the denizens of the dark.

Thieves' Tools: Given the number of traps and locked doors in a typical dungeon, no party should go without a set of these tools. Make them masterwork if you can afford it.

Potions: You can never have too many healing potions in a dungeon. Monsters attack regardless of whether your spellcasters have any spells left, and potions are a great substitute until the next day. Potions of other "buffing" spells, such as *bull's strength*, *bear's endurance*, or *barkskin*, also take some pressure off the party spellcasters so that they can focus more on combat magic.

Investigation

Often, you can learn a few secrets about the dungeon you are about to enter with a little bit of research. Skill checks are especially useful: Gather Information in a local town, along with Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (history), can provide some clues about what you'll face inside, while Decipher Script might help you figure out runes over the entrance or strange graffiti on the walls. Bardic knowledge checks can be helpful when confronted by the mysteries of the dungeon, as can various divination spells.

COMMON HAZARDS

Dungeons are full of dangers, and some of the most frequent are outlined below.

Mazes

Those who venture into a dungeon always run the risk of getting hopelessly lost inside. Keeping a map can be crucial, and a DM might reward a player who takes on the responsibility for the party's map. You don't have to mark every piece of terrain—simply recording where rooms are relative to each other and jotting down a few notable characteristics should do. The mapmaker should also make special note of traps, secret doors, and anything else that isn't easily noticed. A system of commonly understood symbols makes this easier.

Spells, especially those of the divination school, can also assist in navigation. *Arcane mark* tracks where you've already been, *know direction* gives you a better sense of where you're going, and, at higher levels, *find the path* can lead you straight to your goal. *Augury* is an interesting choice when faced with divergent paths, but remember that its results can be misleading.

Monsters

Creatures, whether simply hungry or actively hostile, thrive in dungeons. Monsters that dwell in and are accustomed to the dungeon environment have an advantage over explorers. You need to be prepared for a monster that drops from the ceiling, emerges from a pit, or appears to be something else. Combat is often the simplest, if not the only, way to deal with such threats, but sometimes you can exploit a creature's greedy nature or form an alliance of convenience against greater enemies. See The Dungeon's Cast of Characters, pages 74–75, for more about interacting with other creatures in a dungeon.

Riddles and Puzzles

Not all dangers in a dungeon are physical. Failing mental challenges can hinder your progress or lead you in the wrong direction, as well as trigger a trap or unleash monsters. Puzzles and riddles abound in dungeons: Many are simple logic problems, while others require lateral thinking. Having a character with high Intelligence, Knowledge skills, or bardic knowledge can help in such situations, but the nature of puzzles requires the players, not just the characters, to figure them out. Discuss the possibilities as a group and develop strategies to try out in character, rather than just making a few rolls. For roleplaying purposes, imagine that the resourcefulness of the players at the table represents what the most knowledgeable character in the party knows, and that character can undertake the actions the group decides on.

Traps

Though traps come in myriad forms, methods for avoiding them are similar.

Find: First, you have to know the trap is there. A rogue's trapfinding and the spells *detect snares and pits* and *find traps* are the most obvious ways to locate such dangers. Sometimes the surroundings indicate a trap is nearby, and characters who notice such details can prepare accordingly. Clues include piles of bones or dead bodies in a single place; odd notches or holes in walls or ceilings; strange runes; seams in the floor, walls, or ceiling; chutes or levers; or magical auras that seem out of place.

Disable or Bypass: The most useful method for disarming traps is, of course, Disable Device. Usually, this is sufficient. However, safer and easier solutions can sometimes work. For instance, magic traps can be deactivated by a successful *dispel magic* spell. Traps with touch triggers can be sprung from a safe distance with a long pole, a thrown rock, or a *mage hand* spell. *Silence* negates sound-triggered traps, and visually triggered traps might not respond to invisible characters. Alternative modes of movement, such as *fly* or *dimension door* spells, can overcome many traps, and occasionally a party can simply walk around one.

Salvage: Once in a while, a disabled trap contains something the party can use. A poisoned arrow, alchemical item, or weapon that is part of a trap might be worth snagging.

UNPREDICTABILITY

You can encounter anything in a dungeon. No matter what advice you are given or preparations you take, eventually you will be surprised and you will be caught off guard. Meticulous maps serve no purpose if the dungeon can change its own layout. A comprehensive collection of equipment is useless if a room floods with water and washes it away. Emphasizing close-quarters combat won't help in a large cavern. The best you can do is look out for clues about what is ahead, and not lose your head when something unexpected happens.

The Dungeon Routine

The dungeon is a carefully constructed threat that is out to get you. To challenge it, your party must be equally organized. Here are a few effective policies to stay prepared.

Set a Formation: A carefully arranged group can protect vulnerable members while allowing those who want to engage in combat to do so quickly. Often the constraints of dungeon architecture force a party to travel in single file; in such situations, proper arrangement is vital. For example, in a group consisting of a cleric, fighter, ranger, rogue, and wizard, you might place the rogue in front to scout ahead and look for traps. The fighter comes second so he can rush into melee at a moment's notice. The wizard is at the rear, ready to sling her spells and out of harm's way for the most part. Just in case, the ranger is also toward the rear to watch for threats from behind, protect the wizard, and fire ranged attacks at opponents to the front. Finally, the cleric holds a middle position between the fighter and wizard, ready to heal anyone who needs help and close enough to move into melee if necessary. If you can, spread the party out, about 5 to 10 feet apart from each other. This formation allows tactical movement and ensures that if the party is hit with an area spell, the PCs won't all be toast.

Never Split Up: Though sending one person to scout ahead a short distance is often necessary, avoid separating the party. Being alone in a dungeon makes you an easy target, and being far from healing and support can mean a quick death for you and an easy meal for a monster. Generally, several smaller groups are weaker than one coordinated party working together.

Stay Healthy: Surprise attacks can occur at any time, so make sure all characters are as healthy as possible. How you spend your healing resources outside of combat can make all the difference. At least one character should have ranks in the Heal skill so as to treat some injuries without wasting spells or potions. Save the best healing spells and potions for combat and spend the weaker ones between encounters. Make sure to have *lesser restoration* or *restoration* spells handy; ability score loss is a constant hazard in a dungeon.

Rest Carefully: Getting a full night's sleep in a dungeon can be tough, since an attack can come at any time. Eventually, though, you'll have to rest. Set up a watch and arrange the party to best withstand any attack while characters are sleeping. If your party includes an elf, you can trim down the time other party members spend awake.

Pay Attention: The easiest way to endanger your party in a dungeon is to be reckless. Be on the lookout for traps, don't make sudden loud noises, move stealthily, look before you leap—these simple tips for intelligent play help keep your characters safe.

RACE AND DUNGEONS

Some races have abilities that become more useful than usual in a dungeon.

Dwarf: Their subterranean origins make dwarves perfect for exploring underground dungeons, especially those made of worked stone. With your darkvision, you reduce the party's need for light and can scout ahead without making yourself conspicuous. Your resistance to poison helps you shrug off damage from traps. Finally, stonecunning helps you find some kinds of traps, locate secret doors or hiding places, and sense depth, making dungeon navigation easier.

Elf: A +2 bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks gives you heightened awareness to avoid danger. The ability to detect secret doors is especially useful in a dungeon, where secret passages are common. Half-elves also benefit from improved senses, although they cannot locate secret doors.

Gnome: Your bonus on Listen checks helps you anticipate trouble. Since kobolds and goblinoids frequently appear in underground dungeons, you're more likely to use your bonus on attack rolls against those races.

Half-Orc: Your darkvision lets you keep an eye out at all times. Your +2 racial bonus to Strength not only improves your combat abilities, but also benefits essential dungeon skills such as Climb and Jump.

Halfling: With a +2 bonus on Climb, Jump, and Move Silently checks, you're well suited to negotiating a dungeon's physical challenges. Your racial bonus on saves can protect you in the unfortunate event you do spring a trap. Finally, your Small size can get you into places others can't go.

STANDARD CLASS OPTIONS

The rogue has the best suite of character options for surviving the dungeon environment, including the ability to deal with traps and locks, skill at skulking about, and advantages when striking from concealment. However, all the standard classes in the *Player's Handbook* have abilities or strengths that are useful in a dungeon.

The following entries discuss choices you can make during character creation to improve your dungeoneering party. Each standard class entry also contains one or more alternative class features (introduced in *Player's Handbook II*) to customize your character to the dungeon environment.

BARBARIAN

Your purpose in the dungeon is to fight, plain and simple. With your fast movement and melee prowess, you can reach trouble before it can get to your comrades. In close quarters, where tactical movement is important, Combat Reflexes can be advantageous. If you set up a blocking position in a 10-foot-wide hallway, no enemy can get past you easily. As always, Power Attack and Cleave are your friends.

Your uncanny dodge and trap sense abilities help you avoid surprise dangers, and damage reduction lets you endure more blows than most. Consequently, a party stuck without a rogue (or similar character) might depend on you to take care of traps—simply because you'll get hurt less if you fail.

When the party is faced with obstacles, your high Strength allows you to move aside heavy objects, break down doors, and so forth. You can use Power Attack to help bust through inanimate objects more quickly. If you need an extra edge to accomplish such a task (especially if you're in a hurry), it might even be worth expending a use of your rage to get the job done.

Alternative Class Feature: Trapkiller

You have a knack for avoiding and disabling traps. Your keen instincts help you avoid danger, while your great strength enables you to disrupt dangerous devices.

Level: 3rd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the trap sense ability.

Benefit: Beginning at 3rd level, you gain trapfinding (see the rogue class feature, PH 50), except that you can use Survival instead of Search to locate traps. However, you take a –5 penalty on such checks because of your comparative unfamiliarity with the mechanisms and triggers involved.

Once you find a mechanical trap, you can attempt to disarm it by making an attack roll. You succeed if the result exceeds the Disable Device DC of that trap. Only traps with moving mechanisms or gears (such as shifting floor panels, dropping portcullis gates, or arrow traps) can be disarmed in this manner; simple pitfalls and most magic traps have no mechanism to be so disrupted. You must be able to reach the trap with a melee attack to make a disarm attempt. If you fail to disarm the trap, you automatically spring it.

BARD

You are the expert at solving peculiar problems. Bardic knowledge can give you information about the dungeon's purpose or origin as a whole, the secret answer to an ancient riddle, or the name and powers of a magic item. If the party gets stuck, give bardic knowledge a try. The *legend lore* spell can supplement this ability.

Your bardic music has many useful functions, so you shouldn't waste it on situations that aren't truly dangerous. Don't underestimate the inspire competence ability, though; it improves crucial skill checks, especially Disable Device and Climb, when poor rolls can mean serious trouble.

For your spell selections, focus on utility spells and those that mislead opponents. *Light, know direction, animate rope, detect secret doors, gaseous form, dimension door, freedom of movement, shadow walk*, and *find the path* make navigation and movement smooth. Illusion spells, even simple ones such as *ghost sound*, can trick enemies who are unaware of your presence. Even your cantrips have wide utility: *Detect magic* can sort the treasure hoard, *mage hand* can grab a set of keys from a hook or drop a rock on a trap's trigger plate, *mending* can fix a damaged coil of rope, and *open/close* can crack a door or trapped chest from a safe distance. Don't skimp on your *cure* spells—you'll need them.

Alternative Class Feature: Lore Song

Bardic music serves many purposes, aiding your allies or manipulating your enemies. You have refined your performance of another group of bardic songs, full of lost knowledge, obscure lore, and relevant anecdotes. These lore songs inspire you to come up with new solutions to difficult problems.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the bardic knowledge ability.

Benefit: Once per day, as an immediate action, you can gain a +4 insight bonus on a single attack, check, or save. You gain one additional daily use of this ability at every odd-numbered bard level (3rd, 5th, and so on).

Alternative Class Feature: Mimicking Song

You use your bardic music to create background noise consistent with your adventuring environment, shielding the sounds made by yourself and your adventuring party as you move through dangerous areas.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the countersong bardic music ability.

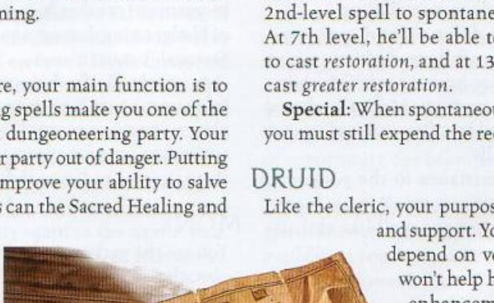
Benefit: *Mimicking song* is a spell-like ability that requires you to have 3 or more ranks in a Perform skill. Using *mimicking song* counts as one of your daily uses of bardic music. You grant a +2 bonus on the Move Silently check of all allies within 30 feet (including yourself). This bonus increases by 2 for every five bard levels you have (to a maximum bonus of +10 at 20th level). This effect lasts as long as you continue performing.

CLERIC

In the dungeon, as elsewhere, your main function is to heal and protect. Your healing spells make you one of the most essential members of a dungeoneering party. Your defensive spells also keep your party out of danger. Putting ranks in the Heal skill can improve your ability to salve your companions' wounds, as can the Sacred Healing and Sacred Purification feats from *Player's Handbook II*. And of course, you are the party's bastion against undead attack.

Choose domains that play to your strengths (such as Healing or Protection) or that overcome dungeon difficulties. The Travel domain can negate obstacles, and the Sun domain gives you some extra offensive magic and more power to face undead-infested dungeons.

You are also a competent melee combatant who can support the fighter or barbarian in your party. You might instead choose to reinforce this role, enhancing your fighting ability with combat-focused feats such as Weapon Focus or Divine Armor (PH2 88).



A map of mystery

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

Alternative Class Feature: Divine Restoration

When you or your teammates lose your strength in the middle of a dungeon, you can't always "call it a day" and rest. You can restore the party's hit points by trading spells for healing magic, but other setbacks besides physical injury might impede your progress: insidious disease, vermin poison, or noxious fumes. By focusing your divine purpose, you can restore your party's lost abilities.

Level: 3rd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you sacrifice one of your domain granted powers.

Benefit: At 3rd level, select one of your chosen cleric domains. You can still select and cast spells from that domain list, but you no longer can use the domain's granted power. Instead, you gain the ability to spontaneously cast *lesser restoration*, *restoration*, or *greater restoration* by sacrificing a prepared spell of the same level.

For example, Jozan is 3rd level and selects this alternate class feature. He had chosen the Healing and Protection domains at 1st level. He gives up the Healing domain granted power. He no longer casts healing spells at +1 caster level, but he can sacrifice a prepared 2nd-level spell to spontaneously cast *lesser restoration*. At 7th level, he'll be able to sacrifice a 4th-level spell to cast *restoration*, and at 13th level, a 7th-level spell to cast *greater restoration*.

Special: When spontaneously casting a *restoration* spell, you must still expend the required components.

DRUID

Like the cleric, your purpose in the dungeon is to heal and support. Your nature-based abilities that depend on vegetation or being outdoors won't help here, so focus on healing and enhancement spells such as *barkskin*, *bull's strength*, and *greater magic fang* (which works either on yourself in wild shape or on your animal companion). Spells that facilitate dungeon movement are worthwhile, including *spider climb*, *warp wood*, *air walk*, *control water*, and *freedom of movement*, and offensive spells such as *call lightning* can be powerful even in close quarters underground.

At low levels, bypassing obstacles can be difficult. You can command an animal companion or creature summoned with a *summon nature's ally* spell (assuming you can communicate with it) to perform a trick that will assist you. For example, a badger could burrow under a door, an eagle could carry a grappling hook to a high ledge, or a monkey could crawl through a narrow passage and lift a latch. By taking a wild shape, especially the elemental forms available to you at higher levels, you can navigate unusual terrain yourself and overcome obstacles the others cannot. Make sure to select the Natural Spell feat so you can use your magic while in wild shape.

Alternative Class Feature: Root Walker

You are a child of the underworld. While other druids dwell in lush forests and rolling fields, you tend to the mushroom tangles and lichen beds that lie beneath their feet.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain any of the following abilities: wild empathy at 1st level, woodland stride at 2nd level, and resist nature's lure at 4th level.

Benefit: At 1st level, you gain vermin empathy. This ability functions just like wild empathy (*PH* 35) except that you can improve the attitude of vermin instead of animals, even though vermin are usually nonintelligent.

At 2nd level, you gain the ability to move over stone, rock, and earthen debris at your full speed without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. This ability functions only with natural surfaces. Magically altered surfaces, such as those created by *soften earth and stone* or *spike stones*, affect you normally.

At 4th level, you gain resistance to the powers of creatures most abhorrent to nature. You gain a +4 bonus on saving throws against the spell-like abilities of aberrations.

FIGHTER

Your role in the dungeon is to fight strategically, protecting the weaker members of the party by holding off enemies. Ranged attacks are certainly possible in larger chambers, but your greatest strength is holding the line in melee. Focus your feats on those that enhance melee combat in tight spaces where movement is limited, such as Combat Reflexes, Cleave and Great Cleave, or Whirlwind Attack. Setting up tactical "pinch points," as mentioned in the barbarian's entry above, will let you deliver more pain than usual. The Vexing Flanker feat (*PH2* 85) makes a flanking position even more deadly against enemies. If you're worried about being caught in the dark, Blind-Fight can be useful.

Your Strength-based skills (Climb and Jump) are vital in the dungeon, allowing you to cross or exploit obstructing terrain. Unless you specialize in light armor and Dexterity-based combat, you'll need maximum ranks to make up for your armor check penalty.

Aside from these considerations, your function isn't much different from that in other situations. A blade is a blade in the dungeon or in the wilderness.

Alternative Class Feature: Dungeon Crasher

Survival in a dungeon requires more than skill at arms and a stout shield. Traps, hazards, falling portcullises, and other threats can pose as much danger as an enraged troll. But you cannot help your impetuous nature. When others might move ahead cautiously and search for traps and other hidden dangers, you charge forward, ignoring the traps you set off and splintering doors and obstacles.

Level: 2nd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the fighter bonus feats at 2nd level and at 6th level.

Benefit: You excel at overwhelming traps, smashing through doors, and pushing aside your enemies. At 2nd level, you gain a +2 competence bonus on saves and to your Armor Class when attacked by traps. You also gain a +5 bonus on Strength checks to break a door, wall, or similar obstacle.

In addition, you gain a special benefit when making a bull rush. If you force an opponent to move into a wall or other solid object, he stops as normal. However, your momentum crushes him against it, dealing an amount of bludgeoning damage equal to 4d6 points + twice your Strength bonus (if any).

At 6th level, the bonuses when dealing with traps increase to +4, and the bonus on Strength checks to break objects increases to +10. The damage you deal when bull rushing an opponent into a wall increases to 8d6 points + three times your Strength bonus.

MONK

You are the party member most able to bypass dungeon obstacles, and you also provide combat support. Your varied class skills, substantial skill points, and lack of reliance on armor make you ideally suited to focusing on essential dungeoneering skills. Climb, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Spot, and Tumble are all good choices; depending on your ability scores, either dominate in one area or select a balanced array.

In combat, use your great mobility to set up flanking positions for other characters (especially the rogue). The Tumble skill can protect you from attacks of opportunity and allow you to move about the battlefield safely. The Acrobatic Strike feat (*PH2* 71) makes tumbling even more worthwhile. For your bonus feats, Combat Reflexes and Improved Trip are useful selections: Knock foes prone, then slam them as they try to rise or crawl away.

Your other class features have broad utility in the dungeon, especially slow fall and immunity to disease and poison. At higher levels, the abundant step ability lets you bypass most obstacles with ease.

Alternative Class Feature: Standing Jump

While most monks gain a fluid grace that allows them to move with astounding speed, you have learned how to focus your energy and expel it in one quick burst.

Level: 3rd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, your fast movement ability is reduced. You gain a +10-foot enhancement bonus to speed at 12th level and another +10-foot bonus at 18th level.

Benefit: At 3rd level, you can make a standing long jump with ease. The check DCs for your long jumps do not require a 20-foot running start and do not double when you leap from a standing position. At 6th level, you apply this skill to high jumps. The check DCs for your high jumps do not double when you leap from a standing position. You lose these benefits when wearing armor (even light armor) or when carrying a medium or heavy load.

Alternative Class Feature: Wall Walker

You have the uncanny ability to travel along vertical surfaces for a short time.

Level: 4th.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the slow fall ability.

Benefit: Beginning at 4th level, as a move action, you can run up or down a vertical surface a total distance of 20 feet without making a Climb check. You add 10 feet to this distance at 6th level and every two levels thereafter, up to your maximum speed. You can use this ability only once per round (so you can't make a double move up or down a wall).

If you do not reach the top of the vertical surface or find a suitable hand- or foothold, you must make a Climb check appropriate to the surface. If you succeed on the check, you can use this ability again in the next round. Otherwise, you fall or make no progress, as determined by the check result.

You can't use this ability to traverse a ceiling or overhang.

PALADIN

Your purpose in the dungeon is to fight and guard against evil. The typical dungeon is full of wicked creatures and magic. Your *detect evil* and smite evil abilities are more likely to come into play in a dungeon than elsewhere. Take advantage of *detect evil* whenever possible to prevent surprise and give the advantage to you instead of to your adversaries. Use your smite cautiously—don't waste it on a weaker being if you suspect greater evil lies ahead.

Lay on hands provides all-important healing and can give the cleric a chance to use offensive or support spells. If you encounter undead that are particularly hard to hit, using lay on hands as a touch attack can more effectively damage them and conserve your party's resources.

Divine health protects you from diseases that can debilitate a party. When facing creatures or environmental hazards that can cause disease, stay in front to protect your companions. Your ability to use *remove disease* at 6th level lets you do even more.

For your spell selection, gauge the party's overall capability to deal with damage, disease, and other ill effects. If they can easily handle those problems, pick spells that grant combat bonuses, such as *bless*, *bull's strength*, *prayer*, and *holy sword*. If not, *cure* and *restoration* spells, *delay poison*, *shield other*, *remove curse*, and *neutralize poison* might be better choices.

Don't bring your mount into the dungeon. Few dungeons are constructed to allow a horse or other Large creature to pass, especially with the added height of a rider, so a mount is usually only a hindrance (and faces unnecessary danger).

Alternative Class Feature: Divine Spirit

Most paladins form a special relationship with a celestial mount that aids them in battle. You, however, spend most of your time fighting below the ground or in enclosed spaces, where a mount is of little use. Instead, you have forged a bond with celestial spirits whose aid you can call upon when needed.

Level: 5th.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the special mount ability.

Benefit: Upon reaching 5th level, you can call upon your deity for aid in the form of a celestial spirit. Using this ability is a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. See below for detailed spirit descriptions and rules.

Your paladin level determines which kinds of celestial spirits answer your summons. You can summon the spirit available at your current level as well as any that became available at lower levels.

Paladin Level	Spirit Summoned
5th–10th	Spirit of healing
11th–15th	Spirit of combat
16th–19th	Spirit of heroism
20th+	Spirit of the fallen

The following entries describe how each of the different spirits function. Unless otherwise specified, all spirits share some characteristics, as set out below.

- A spirit occupies a 5-foot square on the battle map.
- When summoned, a spirit appears on the battlefield within 30 feet of you. You can use a free action to have it move once per round. The spirit has a land speed of 30 feet.
- All spirits are insubstantial and transparent. Any creature can move through them normally, and they do not block line of sight or line of effect.
- A spirit cannot attack or be attacked. It is not undead and cannot be turned. It is subject to *dispel magic*, *dismissal*, or *banishment* as if it were a summoned creature, using your paladin level as the caster level.
- If you lose line of sight to a spirit, it disappears immediately.
- Each spirit available to you can be summoned once per day.
- A spirit remains for a number of rounds equal to your paladin level, until it is dismissed, or until special conditions in the spirit's description are met.

Spirit of Healing: This spirit increases your ability to heal damage dealt to you or your allies. When summoned, it can heal an amount of damage equal to twice the amount you can heal using your lay on hands ability.

To use its healing ability, you or an ally must begin or end your turn in the same square as the spirit. That character can then use a standard action to transfer some or all of the hit points from the spirit to herself. Once the spirit has used all its healing ability, it dissipates.

Spirit of Combat: This spirit enhances combat ability. Whenever an ally (including yourself) is adjacent to the spirit of combat or occupying its space, that character gains holy fervor. Holy fervor grants a +1 sacred bonus on attacks and damage rolls for every four paladin levels you possess (up to a maximum of +5 at 20th level). In addition, affected characters' weapons are treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Spirit of Heroism: This spirit automatically occupies your space and does not leave until dismissed or dispelled, or the duration of the summoning ends. You gain DR 10/—. In addition, you gain the benefit of the Diehard feat (even if you do not meet the prerequisite) and can use your lay on hands ability as a free action once per round instead of as a standard action.

Spirit of the Fallen: While you or any of your allies are adjacent to this spirit, it grants fast healing 10 to those characters. If an affected character's hit points drop to 0 or fewer while within 30 feet of this spirit, it revives that character at the start of his next turn, allowing him to take his action as normal. The character heals an amount of damage equal to twice your paladin level, though if his hit points are still at –10 or below, he still dies. The spirit can use its revive ability once per round.

A spirit of the fallen cannot revive creatures whose bodies have been destroyed (such as by a *disintegrate* spell), nor can it reverse the effects of bodily changes, such as from *flesh to stone* or *baleful polymorph*, or other effects that slay a character without dealing damage.

Soveliss has mastered the art of trapfinding

Illus. by C. Frank

RANGER

Even in the dungeon, you excel at scouting and also provide combat support. Your Track bonus feat lets you find enemies who don't want to be found, so max out your Survival skill to help with the difficult task of tracking creatures over dungeons' stone surfaces. Most of the essential dungeon skills (see the sidebar on page 42) are in your class skill list, so you can become an ideal dungeoneer. Hide and Move Silently provide much-needed stealth. If the party has no rogue, focus on skills that will let you fill a similar role, and consider the Nimble Fingers feat to compensate for not having Disable Device and Open Lock as class skills.

When selecting a favored enemy, try to anticipate creature types that are more prevalent in dungeons, such as aberrations, monstrous humanoids, evil outsiders, undead, or vermin.

Dungeoneering need not make archery a bad choice of combat style. Sometimes a situation will simply not leave enough room to move into melee, making archery a powerful alternative even in cramped quarters. Take Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot to nullify the disadvantages posed by small rooms and narrow corridors.

As with the druid, if you have an animal companion, select a creature with a special mode of movement, such as a badger, eagle, or owl.

For your spells, stick with choices that work in a dungeon. *Detect snares and pits, jump, pass without trace, freedom of movement*, and *commune with nature* speed travel and facilitate stealth even if you're not outdoors. *Barkskin, bear's endurance*, and other ability boosters support your party with combat advantages. *Remove disease* and *freedom of movement* can deal with setbacks. If your party is short on healing, make sure to prepare plenty of *cure* spells.

Alternative Class Feature: Trap Expert

Many rangers journey across the wild lands of the surface, but you are trained to descend deep into the earth.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain the Track feat at 1st level or the swift tracker ability at 8th level.

Benefit: You gain the trapfinding ability of the rogue. In addition, you gain Disable Device as a class skill. You can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and you can use Disable Device to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature (*PH* 50).

ROGUE

Your purpose in the dungeon is, frankly, to do everything. You are the skill expert, and the rest of your party relies on your expertise. Other characters probably do not have Disable Device, Knowledge (dungeoneering), and Open Lock, so make sure you have plenty of ranks in those skills. Increase your stealth with Hide and Move Silently, both for setting up sneak attacks and because you'll often be ahead of the party, looking for traps—max out your Search skill as well. Balance and Tumble help avoid the (literal) pitfalls of dungeon delving.

You are the best character to disarm traps. Your class skills and special abilities let you deal with most traps easily. Don't forget to purchase a set of thieves' tools (preferably masterwork) and a 10-foot pole or other reaching device to test traps from a distance.

In combat, sneak attacks are your specialty. With Tumble, you can move through a crowd of creatures to set up flanking opportunities. The Acrobatic Strike and Combat Acrobat feats (both in *Player's Handbook II*) provide attack bonuses and reduce movement penalties while you are tumbling. Combat Reflexes, Mobility, and Spring Attack all increase your combat options.

Alternative Class Feature: Quick Fingers

Sometimes only a few seconds make the difference between stopping the descent of a spiked ceiling and coming to a messy end. Through countless hours of practice, you have learned to make quick work of traps. But this speed comes at a price. Because you focus on disarming traps, you react more slowly when a trap activates.

Level: 3rd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain trap sense +1 at 3rd level. Instead, you gain trap sense +1 at 6th level, with an additional increase of +1 every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of +4 at 18th level).

Benefit: When you use Disable Device to disarm a trap, the time required to perform the check is reduced. Use the following table in place of the one on page 72 of the *Player's Handbook.*

Device	Time	Disable Device DC
Simple	1 move action	10
Tricky	1 standard action	15
Difficult	1 full-round action	20
Wicked	1d4 rounds	25+

Alternative Class Feature: Penetrating Strike

Creatures that have immunity to extra damage from sneak attacks are a bane to rogues everywhere. Particularly in ancient tombs where undead are common, rogues must rely on their wits to survive. You have spent a significant amount of time studying this problem and have learned ways to harm even such resilient opponents.

Level: 3rd.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain trap sense.

Benefit: Whenever you flank a creature that is immune to extra damage from sneak attacks, you still deal extra damage equal to half your normal sneak attack dice. This benefit does not apply against creatures that cannot be flanked, nor against foes that are otherwise denied their Dexterity bonus to AC or flat-footed but not flanked.

SORCERER

In the dungeon, as elsewhere, you are the blaster. With a limited spell selection, you're better off focusing on damage-dealing spells—especially those that take advantage of confined space—than trying to plan for contingencies. *Burning hands, flaming sphere, fireball, lightning bolt, cloudkill,* and *chain lightning* work best when enemies are close together (and prove the point that your party members shouldn't travel in a tight pack). Also consider force and sonic spells, and those that ignore spell resistance (as many conjuration spells do), so you have the best chance of dealing maximum damage to any sort of enemy.

A few movement-enhancing spells, such as *fly* and *dimension door,* are certainly worth learning. For 0-level spells, *light* is always good, *mage hand* and *open/close* can test for traps, *ghost sound* can trick sentries, and *arcane mark* helps you find your way in mazes.

Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), and Spellcraft are your most useful class skills. If you have some points left to spend, consider cross-class skills that are useful in the dungeon, especially Spot. When it comes to feats, Combat Casting will keep you from losing spells in a sticky situation, and Spell Focus (evocation) improves your offensive capability. Be careful about area spells that can harm your own party members; consider Sculpt Spell (*Complete Arcane* 83) to leave safe spaces when you don't have the opportunity to target your effects perfectly.

Alternative Class Feature: Spell Shield

As a powerful spellcaster, you're likely to attract the attention of powerful opponents, and your teammates can't always protect you. Spell shield lets you use your spells' energy to offset damage that might otherwise kill you.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: By achieving oneness with the magical energy from which you draw your power, you make it part of your life force. As an immediate action when you take damage from any source, you can attempt to sacrifice spell energy instead of losing hit points. Expend a spell slot as if you had cast a spell of that level. Then, make a Concentration check with a DC equal to 15 + the level of the sacrificed spell. If you succeed, you ignore an amount of damage equal to five times the level of the spell slot you gave up. If you fail, you still lose the spell, but the magical energy fails to negate any of the damage.

For example, Hennet finds himself in the way of a black dragon's breath. Although he succeeded on his saving throw, he is still going to take 22 points of acid damage. As a 7th-level sorcerer, Hennet can sacrifice a spell of up to 3rd level. He chooses a 3rd-level spell, so the DC of his Concentration check is 18. Hennet gets a result of 22 and magically negates 15 points of the acid damage, taking only 7 points.

Special: You can attempt to deflect damage as often as you wish, but you can make only one attempt per round.

Special: If an attack's damage has multiple sources (such as that of a *flaming sword*, which deals both weapon damage and fire damage), you must choose which source to negate.

Special: If an attack must deal damage to have a secondary effect (such as poison from a snake's bite), negating all the damage also prevents the secondary effect.

WIZARD

Your role in the dungeon is to understand and overcome. Decipher Script, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (history), and Spellcraft all give you access to lore others might not have. It's a good idea to coordinate with other arcane casters and Knowledge specialists (especially bards) to avoid needless duplication of expertise. For feats, Combat Casting is always a good choice, and your high number of bonus feats lets you focus on useful metamagic or item creation.

Your choice of spells depends largely on what type of dungeon you enter. You should always have some basic combat spells available, such as *mage armor, magic missile,* and *fireball.* For the rest, pick utility spells, including illusions to trick guards, ways to escape dangerous conditions (such as *feather fall*), movement enhancers (*fly, dimension door*), and finders of hidden hazards and benefits (*detect secret doors, arcane eye*). *Dispel magic* negates many sorts of hazards. As you proceed through a dungeon, you can adapt your spell selections accordingly. It can be worthwhile to leave a spell slot or two open to allow emergency preparation for a specific situation, and the Alacritous Cogitation feat (*Complete Mage* 37) lets you do it on the fly.

You can use Scribe Scroll to prepare utility spells such as *knock, detect secret doors, rope trick,* and *gaseous form* ahead of time, leaving space for more offensive power. The XP cost for scribing low-level spells is minimal, and the flexibility it allows is well worth the price. Wands of useful low-level spells, such as *detect magic, feather fall,* and *mage armor,* are also handy.

Alternative Class Feature: Wizard of Sun and Moon

You have attuned yourself to the motions of the cosmos. The sun does more than mark off the day as it travels across the sky. It alters the magic you command and the spells available to you. When in the sun's warm embrace, you can cast one set of spells. When you journey into the dark, or when the moon hangs in the sky, you gain access to a second set of spells. This alternative class feature does not give you more spells to cast; it gives you more to prepare and choose from.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this alternative class feature, you do not gain a familiar.

Benefit: You can designate one slot per spell level above 0 as the union of sun and moon. When you prepare your spells, you can prepare two spells for one or more of these slots. Designate one of the two as a spell of the moon and the other as a spell of the sun. You can cast the moon spell only if you are underground or aboveground during the night, and you can cast the sun spell only when you are aboveground during daylight hours. If you cast one of these paired spells, it takes effect normally, but you no longer can use that spell slot to cast the spell from the opposite environment.

For example, Mialee is a 5th-level wizard with Intelligence 16. She selects this class option and prepares her spells for the day as follows. In the list, a superscript M denotes a spell of the moon, which can be cast only underground, or at night aboveground, and a superscript S denotes a spell of the sun, which can be cast only aboveground in daylight.

3rd—*daylight*^{M}, *displacement*^{S}, *suggestion*

2nd—*blur, mirror image*^{M}, *scorching ray, Tasha's hideous laughter*^{S}

1st—*animate rope*^{S}, *hypnotism, magic missile, magic weapon*^{M}, *sleep*

0—*acid splash, daze, read magic, resistance*

If Mialee casts *daylight* while underground, she marks that spell plus its environmentally opposite spell of the same level (in this case, *displacement*) off her list of prepared spells.

NEW STANDARD CLASS: FACTOTUM

"If anyone can do it, I can do it."

—Alerach Longseeker, half-elf factotum

It is foolhardy to explore a dungeon alone. Those who attempt to do so quickly find that they lack the skills needed to get the job done. Sometimes, this can happen in larger parties as well. Enter the factotum, a new standard class, capable of mimicking the abilities of others and filling in when the need is greatest.

TABLE 1–1: THE FACTOTUM **HIT DIE: D8**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Spell Level	Inspiration Points	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	—	2	Inspiration, cunning insight, cunning knowledge, trapfinding
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	0	3	*Arcane dilettante* (1 spell)
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	1	3	Brains over brawn, cunning defense
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	1	3	*Arcane dilettante* (2 spells), cunning strike
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	2	4	Opportunistic piety
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	2	4	—
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	2	4	*Arcane dilettante* (3 spells)
8th	+6/+1	+2	+6	+2	3	5	Cunning surge
9th	+6/+1	+3	+6	+3	3	5	*Arcane dilettante* (4 spells)
10th	+7/+2	+3	+7	+3	4	5	Opportunistic piety (+1 use)
11th	+8/+3	+3	+7	+3	4	6	Cunning breach
12th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	4	6	*Arcane dilettante* (5 spells)
13th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	5	6	Cunning dodge
14th	+10/+5	+4	+9	+4	5	7	*Arcane dilettante* (6 spells)
15th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+9	+5	6	7	Opportunistic piety (+1 use)
16th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	6	7	Improved cunning defense
17th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	6	8	*Arcane dilettante* (7 spells)
18th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+11	+6	7	8	—
19th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+11	+6	7	8	Cunning brilliance
20th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+12	+6	7	10	*Arcane dilettante* (8 spells), opportunistic piety (+1 use)

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level, ×4 at 1st level): All. Factotums have a huge repository of knowledge, allowing them to treat any skill as a class skill.

After a lifetime of work, few can claim even a fraction of the versatility that the factotum displays every day. Skilled in nearly every art, factotums draw upon their lore to master almost any trade or ability for a brief period of time before other pursuits draw their attention. Whereas bards use their general knowledge to aid others, factotums focus their abilities solely upon themselves. Constantly on the hunt for new abilities and tricks, factotums eventually find the right tool to overcome practically any problem.

However, a factotum cannot go it alone. He relies on sudden flashes of insight gleaned from his studies and the broad array of his experiences. He might not be the best fighter or the mightiest spellcaster in a group, but when the party needs a stout warrior or an arcane spell, the factotum can provide it.

If you like having a trick up your sleeve, or if you want to have an answer to almost any problem, then the factotum is the class for you. Your intellect bolsters your fighting ability, and your basic understanding of divine magic and arcane spells allows you to manipulate magical energy.

MAKING A FACTOTUM

As a factotum, you are a jack of all trades. For short periods of time, you can stand in for almost any other member of the party. Your intellect, training, and experiences allow you to bolster your efforts in almost any situation. But your magical abilities are at best limited. You can master potent spells, but your lack of formal training makes it difficult for you to use them more than once each day. Furthermore, your understanding of magic is broad rather than deep.

Abilities: Intelligence is a factotum's most important ability. Almost everything you do relies upon it. You master so many areas of study because you have the keen mind needed to learn through observation and experience, rather than formal study. When you fight, use a skill, or cast a spell, your Intelligence plays a role in your success. Of course, Dexterity and Strength are useful, too. When you cannot provide a cunning solution to a problem, you can heft an axe or fire a bow as well as a cleric.

Races: Factotums are commonly humans, halflings, and gnomes. Those races are a natural fit because of their inquisitive nature, personal drive, and clever solutions to tough problems. Longer-lived races, such as dwarves and elves, find a factotum's fickle nature to be a poor imitation of the true mastery that can be attained only through centuries of life. Due to their low Intelligence, half-orcs find the factotum class difficult to master, but some manage to make a name for themselves.

Alignment: Factotums can be of any alignment. Some use their abilities for good, helping people in need and learning from the attendant challenges. Other factotums view the world as a well that is rightfully theirs, and they take what they like from it. Relying upon no one but themselves, these evil factotums steal and cheat to gain power and use their abilities to further their own ends. The majority of factotums fall somewhere between these extremes. They appreciate a stable, benevolent society, but they are too absorbed in travel and study to care much about others.

Factotums usually favor law over chaos; they love to find structure and insight in the topics they study. Chaotic factotums are vagabonds and wanderers who experience life as it comes, believing that whatever topics happen to cross their paths are as good as any other.

Starting Gold: 6d4 × 10 gp (150 gp).

Starting Age: As wizard.

CLASS FEATURES

You can fill almost any role in the party, but you typically do so only on a temporary basis. If Jozan the cleric suffers a grievous injury, you can provide some healing until he recovers. If mighty Tordek is paralyzed, you can draw your weapon and hold the line for a few rounds. When a troll lurches into view, you can cast an acid spell if Mialee did not prepare one. However, you can pull off such tricks only for a limited time each day. The key to succeeding as a factotum lies in identifying what the group needs at a given moment and filling that need.

Alerach the factotum is ready for anything

Illus. by M. Coimbra

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A factotum is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor and shields (except tower shields). Because he uses spells as if they were spell-like abilities, a factotum can wear armor without incurring the normal arcane spell failure chance. A multiclass factotum still incurs the normal arcane spell failure chance for arcane spells received from other classes.

Inspiration: The factotum is a dabbler, a professional explorer who plunders a wide variety of fields to find the tools he needs to survive. He reads through tomes of arcane magic to gain a basic understanding of spells. He offers prayers to a variety of deities to gain their blessings. He observes warrior stances and exercises to understand the art of fighting. But while a factotum learns many paths, he masters none of them. Rather than train in a given field, he masters all the basics and manages to pull out something useful when the situation is desperate enough.

To represent this seemingly random body of knowledge, a factotum gains inspiration points that he can spend to activate his abilities. At the beginning of each encounter, he gains a number of inspiration points determined by his level (see Table 1–1).

Cunning Insight (Ex): Before making an attack roll, damage roll, or saving throw, you can spend 1 inspiration point to gain a competence bonus on the roll equal to your Intelligence modifier. Cunning insight does not require an action, and you can use it as often as you wish during your turn or others' turns—provided that you have the inspiration points to spend. Because this ability provides a competence bonus, it does not stack with itself.

Cunning Knowledge (Ex): When making a check involving a skill in which you have at least 1 rank, you can spend 1 inspiration point to gain a bonus on the check equal to your factotum level. You can use this ability once per day for a particular skill. For example, if you use cunning knowledge to gain a bonus on a Hide check, you cannot use the ability to improve other Hide checks for the rest of the day, though you can use it on different skills.

Trapfinding (Ex): You can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and you can use Disable Device to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature (*PH* 50).

Arcane Dilettante (Sp): At 2nd level, you acquire a vague understanding of magic. You know that with a few weird hand gestures and an array of grunts and bizarre words, you can conjure up something that looks like a spell. By spending 1 inspiration point, you can mimic a spell as a spell-like ability.

At the start of each day, choose a number of spells from the sorcerer/wizard spell list based on your factotum level. You can choose one spell at 2nd level, and you gain additional spells as shown on Table 1–1. The maximum level of spell you can use, according to your class level, is also shown on the table. You can select any sorcerer/wizard spell up to that level, but you can prepare only one spell of your maximum level. Your caster level equals your level in this character class. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against your spell is 10 + the spell level + your Int modifier.

Once you have used a spell, you cannot use it again until you have rested for 8 hours. After resting for this time, you choose new spells and lose any unused spells from the previous day, though you can select the same spell on consecutive days. You cannot prepare the same spell multiple times to use it more than once during the same day.

You cannot use spells that require an XP cost. You must otherwise provide the necessary material components as normal.

If you wish to enhance a spell with a metamagic feat, you must apply the feat when you prepare the spell. In addition, you must be capable of using a spell of the modified spell's level.

Brains over Brawn (Ex): At 3rd level, you gain your Intelligence bonus as a modifier on Strength checks, Dexterity checks, and checks involving skills based on Strength or Dexterity, such as Hide, Climb, and Jump.

Cunning Defense (Ex): You study your opponents and learn to anticipate their attacks. Starting at 3rd level, you can spend 1 inspiration point to gain your Intelligence bonus as a dodge bonus to Armor Class against one opponent for 1 round. Using this ability is a free action. You gain this benefit even while wearing medium or heavy armor. You can use this ability multiple times to gain a bonus against different opponents, but you cannot use it more than once during your turn against a single foe.

Cunning Strike (Ex): With a quick study of a vulnerable opponent's defenses, you can spot the precise area you need to hit to score a telling blow. Starting at 4th level, you can spend 1 inspiration point to gain 1d6 points of sneak attack damage. You must spend the inspiration point to activate this ability before making the attack roll. When determining if you can use sneak attack against a target that has uncanny dodge, use your factotum level as your rogue level.

Opportunistic Piety (Su): Factotums are legendary for the number of holy symbols, lucky trinkets, and blessed items they keep handy. As the saying goes, there are no atheists in the dungeon. Starting at 5th level, you can spend 1 inspiration point to channel divine energy as a standard action. You can use this energy to heal injuries, harm undead, or turn undead. At 5th level, you can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom bonus (if any). You gain one extra daily use of this ability at 10th level, 15th level, and 20th level. You cannot use opportunistic piety if you have exhausted your daily uses, even if you have inspiration points left to spend.

If you use this ability to heal injuries, you channel positive energy to heal a living creature of a number of points of damage equal to twice your factotum level + your Int modifier. The energy will also deal the same amount of damage to undead targets.

If you use this ability to turn undead, you act as a cleric of a level equal to your factotum level. No matter what your alignment, you cannot control undead—your understanding of divine magic is too rudimentary.

Cunning Surge (Ex): Starting at 8th level, you learn to push yourself when needed. By spending 3 inspiration points, you can take an extra standard action during your turn.

Cunning Breach (Su): Starting at 11th level, your broad knowledge allows you to study an opponent and gain a brief flash of insight to breach her defenses. By spending 2 inspiration points as a free action, you can ignore a single target's spell resistance and damage reduction for 1 round. The target automatically fails any spell resistance check that she attempts to avoid your spell.

Cunning Dodge (Ex): Starting at 13th level, your luck, reflexes, and intuition allow you to avoid an attack or spell that would otherwise defeat you. If you take damage that would reduce you to 0 or fewer hit points, you can spend 4 inspiration points as an immediate action to ignore the damage. You dodge out of the way, take cover from a spell, or otherwise escape. You can use this ability once per day.

Improved Cunning Defense (Ex): At 16th level, you gain your Intelligence bonus as a dodge bonus to Armor Class. You no longer need to spend an inspiration point to gain this benefit. Unlike the standard cunning defense ability, you do not gain this benefit when wearing medium or heavy armor.

Cunning Brilliance (Ex): At 19th level, you become the ultimate jack of all trades. Your sharp mind and keen sense of your surroundings allow you to duplicate almost any ability you witness. At the start of each day, choose three extraordinary class abilities. Each ability must be available to a standard character class at 15th level or lower, and must appear on the advancement table or in the text description for that class. By spending 4 inspiration points as a free action, you gain the benefits and drawbacks of one chosen ability for 1 minute. You use the ability as if your level in the relevant class equaled your factotum level. You can use each chosen class ability once per day.

For example, if you use a monk's flurry of blows ability, you gain all the benefits and drawbacks described under Flurry of Blows (PH 40). You do not gain the benefits of unarmed strike, because that is a separate ability in the monk's class description.

PLAYING A FACTOTUM

Knowledge is everything, and applied knowledge is even better. You adventure out of a sense of curiosity, a desire to pierce the veil of ignorance that shrouds so much of the world. If you hear rumors of an island with beaches of diamonds and mountains of gold, you want to find the island, determine its origin, and learn its secrets. To other adventurers, the entrance to a dungeon is a gateway to treasure and power. To you, it is a promise of secrets waiting in the dungeon's deepest levels.

Think of yourself as an adventuring scholar, an expert who has the right answer at the right time, a seeker who finds the truths hidden in the world. You are the one who notices that an ogre has a long scar along its leg, allowing you to strike the creature where the old wound has not fully healed. You are the one who read a book on the dark arts, allowing you to conjure the spell needed to banish an ice devil. Other adventurers must prepare their abilities and hope they have the right tools to overcome a challenge. You wait for difficulties to present themselves and then decide what talents to employ.

Versatility is the key to your success. In some encounters, you draw your weapon and hold back the enemy. In others, you slip around behind the foe to unleash a potent spell. At other times, you scout ahead, uncover traps, and clear the way for your friends.

Religion

Most factotums worship a variety of deities and have holy symbols for every occasion. A typical factotum might offer one prayer to Obad-Hai before venturing into the wilds, and another to Moradin while traveling through an abandoned dwarf mine. Factotums seek a higher understanding of the world than a single deity can offer. Besides, they know enough about divine magic to leach energy from a number of gods. It pays to spread the prayers out.

If a factotum favors one deity, it is usually Boccob, the god of magic and knowledge. But few factotums are religious fanatics. Instead, they see Boccob as the ideal manifestation of their talents, a cunning mastermind who has accumulated boundless knowledge.

A few factotums of non-evil alignment revere Vecna. They see that dread deity as the keeper of knowledge and secrets, and they hope to uncover his most potent mysteries to better master the world. While they might revile Vecna's methods, they respect the knowledge he keeps and the secrecy with which he protects it.

Other Classes

You work well with other classes whose role is clearly defined, such as fighters, barbarians, clerics, sorcerers, and wizards. While you appreciate the dual roles of paladins, druids, bards, and rangers, you often feel frustration at their difficulty in identifying where their skills are needed most. You have the most in common with rogues and wizards, whose reliance on cunning and knowledge is similar to your own.

Combat

You are best suited to filling whatever role the party needs, so try not to spend your inspiration points too early in a battle. If the fighter falls to a lucky attack, you will have to take his place and hold back the enemy. If the wizard runs out of spells, your arcane talents will prove crucial. Likewise, save your healing for a critical juncture or until the cleric is down or out of spells.

Advancement

You have unmatched flexibility in building your talents. You can emphasize one ability or nurse a broad range of abilities. In most cases, feats that consistently improve your talents are better than feats that function only in certain situations. For example, Weapon Focus improves all your attacks, whereas Power Attack provides more limited benefits.

When multiclassing or taking levels in a prestige class, find combinations that broaden your abilities or that increase your flexibility. Bonus feats allow you to improve your combat prowess while retaining much of your flexibility. If your feats make you a more competent warrior, you can spend inspiration points on spells rather than on improving your attack rolls and damage rolls.

The chameleon prestige class (*Races of Destiny*) deserves special mention. This class allows you to change your focus on a daily basis, making it possible to switch from being a skilled warrior to being a potent spellcaster. This prestige class is a great combination with the factotum class. The chameleon's focus allows you to fill a single role well, and the factotum's inspiration points let you retain the flexibility to heal an ally, make a sneak attack, or deliver a decisive blow. In many ways, chameleons are factotums who specialize in a few narrow fields.

STARTING PACKAGE

Human Factotum

Ability Scores: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration, Disable Device, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, Sense Motive, Spot.

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Weapons: Morningstar (1d8/×2), shortbow (1d6/×3, 60 ft.).

Armor: Studded leather armor (+3 AC).

Other Gear: Thieves' tools, flask of acid, alchemist's fire, 26 gp.

FACTOTUMS IN THE WORLD

"If you can put up with his lectures on ancient architecture, there's no one else I'd want to take with me into the dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk."

—Dread Delgath, adventuring wizard

The factotum class gives players a chance to be the archetypal jack of all trades. Inspiration points allow a factotum to excel in a wide variety of situations because he decides which of his capabilities to bolster. While other classes are locked into certain abilities, a factotum has unmatched flexibility.

Daily Life

Factotums are curious, driven, and inquisitive. They adventure not only for gold and glory, but also to uncover lost secrets and expand their lore. They find almost any situation interesting, wanting to learn everything from the intricate social protocols of a royal court to the tactics used by rampaging goblins.

Many factotums become sages and loremasters when they retire. They catalog the lore they uncovered and use it to advise others, particularly adventurers. A retired factotum likely has an archive of maps and charts from his previous exploits, tools that can prove useful for the next generation of explorers.

Notables

Factotums rise to become advisors, sages, and experts in a variety of subjects. Alerach Longseeker, for example, is famous for crossing the Barrier Peaks, the Hellfurnaces, and the Yatil Mountains in a series of solo expeditions. Rumors say that he owns the last surviving map of the location of a fabled dungeon of metal corridors high in the Barrier Peaks.

Organizations

Rather than create their own organizations, factotums tend to join groups founded and run by others. Many thieves' guilds employ a few factotums to handle unexpected dangers on a heist. Some factotums join formal adventuring guilds and companies to find ready allies to help them on their expeditions.

NPC Reactions

Most commoners have no idea what to make of a factotum's unpredictable skills and abilities. Barbarians, druids, and other folk of the wilderness see factotums as overeducated and overly civilized, but an adventure with one in the wilds quickly dispels that notion. Most adventurers are happy to have a factotum in the party, especially on a dungeon expedition during which traveling back to civilization will be difficult, and determining what dangers lie ahead nearly impossible.

FACTOTUM LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research factotums to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 15: Factotums are sages and experts who master a variety of talents.

DC 20: Factotums draw on their training and intelligence to fight well, cast spells, and heal wounds, but they lack the formal training needed to do so consistently.

FACTOTUMS IN THE GAME

Factotums are the closest characters in the D&D game to professional adventurers. Fighters serve as soldiers and mercenaries, wizards delve into the secrets of magic, clerics lead the worship of deities, and rogues beg, borrow, and steal. Factotums, however, explore the world and uncover its secrets. They usually gather in large numbers near well-known dungeons. Many children who dream of gaining wealth and fame by looting tombs, braving the planes, and defeating powerful monsters grow up to become factotums. In rare cases, factotums form professional adventuring unions and guilds, just like blacksmiths, bakers, and other artisans.

The typical D&D campaign world has plenty of dungeons and treasure to go around. It makes sense that a class of professional adventurers would arise in time. Factotums fill this role—they are the experts who cultivate all the skills needed to make it as adventurers.

Adaptation

The factotum is readily adaptable to most campaign worlds as a sage, an expert, or a jack of all trades. Fantasy literature offers many examples of a hero who uses his experience and cunning to overcome obstacles. He need not wear heavy armor, carry a sword, or cast a spell to make a name for himself. A quick wit, a brave heart, and boundless energy are enough to best many challenges.

A factotum is similar to an everyman hero, an average person who uses his wits and bravery. Good examples include wandering adventurers, rugged explorers, and cunning archaeologists. The *Indiana Jones* movies provide a perfect example of a factotum. Indiana Jones dodges traps, uses his scholarly knowledge to find hidden treasures, handles a whip and a gun, and throws a mean left hook. In a D&D campaign, replace his gun with a basic understanding of magic, and you have a factotum.

Sample Encounter

An encounter with a factotum should highlight his use of a wide range of abilities. A factotum in light armor might appear to be a rogue at first, but he can surprise the party by casting a spell or healing himself. A factotum also makes a useful contact for the PCs. He might share secrets that lead to hidden treasure, sponsor expeditions to recover lost antiquities, and so on.

EL 6: Alerach Longseeker is a retired adventurer who runs a small museum filled with strange objects, preserved monsters, and other oddities he acquired during his career. He pays adventuring parties to bring back intriguing trinkets, unusual treasure, and items from ancient civilizations. In return, he provides cash rewards, maps to lost treasures, and other services. Alerach is a mentor to many young factotums, and his personal library is an astounding source of information.

ALERACH LONGSEEKER **CR 6**

Male half-elf factotum 6
NG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
(+2 Dex, +3 armor)
hp 36 (6 HD)
Immune magical sleep
Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1; +2 against enchantments

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee light mace +5 (1d6+1)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5
Atk Options cunning insight, cunning defense, cunning strike
Special Actions arcane dilettante, opportunistic piety 2/day
Combat Gear *horn of fog*
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 6th):
1st—*expeditious retreat, magic missile*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 10
SQ brains over brawn, cunning knowledge (1/day per skill), elf blood, inspiration (4 points), trapfinding
Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload

Skills Climb +4, Decipher Script +12, Disable Device +12, Gather Information +4, Hide +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen +0, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +14, Ride +5, Search +13, Sleight of Hand +5, Spot +0, Survival +8 (+10 following tracks, +10 underground), Swim +4, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +9 (+11 scrolls), Use Rope +5

Possessions combat gear plus masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, light mace, +1 *leather armor, Heward's handy haversack,* maps of dozens of known and unknown dungeons

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Arcane Dilettante (Sp) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to mimic a spell of 2nd level or lower as a spell-like ability.

Brains over Brawn (Ex) Alerach gains a +3 bonus on Strength checks, Dexterity checks, and skill checks based on Strength or Dexterity.

Cunning Defense (Ex) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to gain a +3 dodge bonus to his Armor Class against one opponent for 1 round.

Cunning Insight (Ex) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to gain a competence bonus of +3 on one attack roll, damage roll, or saving throw.

Cunning Knowledge (Ex) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to gain a +6 bonus on any skill for which he has at least 1 rank.

Cunning Strike (Ex) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to make a sneak attack that deals 1d6 points of damage on any single attack.

Opportunistic Piety (Su) Alerach can spend 1 inspiration point to channel divine energy that heals living targets (up to 15 points of damage), harms undead targets (up to 15 points of damage), or turns undead (as a 6th-level cleric).

Trapfinding (Ex) Alerach can use the Search skill to locate traps with a DC higher than 20, and he can use Disable Device to bypass a trap or disarm magic traps. See the rogue class feature (*PH* 50).

DUNGEON TERRAIN

Dungeons share a few features, whether they are elaborate fortifications, natural caverns, or the bizarre lairs of unknowable intellects. They are enclosed, self-contained spaces that include walls, floors, passages and doors, as well as less common details. Such terrain features can be of typical materials, such as wood, stone, or iron, as detailed in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 59–67). But unusual terrain abounds in dungeons, making every experience unique. A dungeon could contain virtually anything, depending on the reasons for and the theme of its construction (for more information, see Chapter 4 of this book).

This section describes a few new forms of dungeon terrain, including unusual substances and structures. Such elements can significantly affect an encounter. For example, a fight with a group of barbed devils is far more difficult in a room with walls made of fire and an unhallowed altar that grants them *protection from energy (electricity).*

Complete rules for creating and interacting with these new dungeon features can be found in Chapter 7. This section presents typical situations, but a particularly high-level or strange dungeon might have unusual side effects, higher check DCs, and the like, according to the whim of its builder and the imagination of the DM.

WALLS

Walls not only define the boundaries of each room and corridor but also illustrate a dungeon's theme and present interesting challenges to parties that explore it. For example, the walls in a lich's crypt might be made from the skulls and bones of the horror's victims, bound together with dark magic, that reach out to attack adventurers.

Common wall types are described on page 59 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but more exotic wall types exist. Some types of walls, such as air, define a space rather than forming a solid physical boundary. Others, such as walls of magma, hinder intruders and lend an advantage to creatures immune to their effects. Some walls can be penetrated or temporarily breached, unlike ordinary walls of stone, but might have unpleasant effects or slow the passage of PCs.

Some walls are formed by permanent magical effects, such as *walls of fire,* or are supported by permanent force effects. Such walls are susceptible to *dispel magic* and similar effects. Many walls instead rely on intrinsic magical support and cannot be dealt with so easily.

Walls of Air

Gusts of swirling wind carrying dust and debris define the boundaries of these walls. Crossing through a typical wall of air requires a successful Strength check, depending on the thickness of the wall (see Table 7–1). Successfully moving through a wall of air does not slow movement. Creatures who fail this check must end their movement and make a successful check in the following round to move through the wall. The wall functions in all other ways like the *wind wall* spell (*PH* 302), deflecting some ranged attacks and preventing gases and some flying creatures from passing through. It is possible to remain within a wall of air, though the strong winds hinder some activities (*DMG* 95).

Some such walls form shrouds of vapor or smoke. A wall of vapor is somewhat opaque; it can be of any color and provides concealment (20% miss chance) to those on the other side. Particularly unpleasant variants might include noxious vapors such as inhaled poisons, a *stinking cloud* spell, or the extracted stench of a ghoul or troglodyte. Air-breathing characters passing through such walls are subject to their effects if they do not take adequate precautions such as holding their breath. A wall of smoke provides total concealment (50% miss chance) and presents a greater hazard to air-breathing creatures. If such a creature does not hold its breath while passing through the wall or spending 1 or more rounds within the smoke, it must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw (+1 per previous check) or spend 1d4 rounds choking and coughing, unable to take any action other than movement and defense.

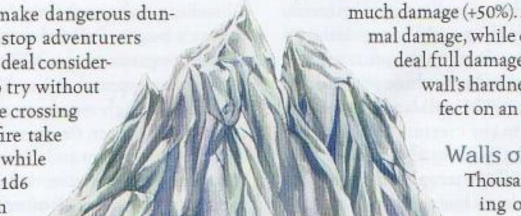
Walls of Bone

Made from the skeletons of innumerable creatures, walls of bone are common in the dungeons of powerful necromancers and undead. Melded together or partially animated with foul magic, or simply mortared in place, these gruesome walls frequently include other magical effects. Some such walls include animated limbs that grab at explorers who stray too close (attack +0, grapple –4). A turning or rebuking check that affects at least 4 HD of undead deactivates a wall of bone for 1 minute, canceling any grapple effects. If the result of a turning check is destruction, the wall crumbles, opening a 10-foot space. If the result of a rebuking check is command, the wall attacks only those targets designated by its new master. A wall of bone does not count toward the total Hit Dice of undead a spellcaster can control.

Walls of Fire

Curtains of blazing fire make dangerous dungeon walls. They do not stop adventurers from passing through but deal considerable damage to those who try without adequate protection. Those crossing through a wall made of fire take 4d6 points of fire damage, while those within 5 feet take 1d6 points of fire damage each round. Applying at least 10 gallons of water or dealing at least 20 points of cold damage in 1 round extinguishes a 10-foot section of a wall of fire for 1d4 rounds.

Walls made of fire obscure vision, providing total concealment to those on the other side. Variant energy walls, such as those made of freezing vapor (negated by 20 points of fire damage instead of cold damage) or acid sheets, can also exist. Such walls deal damage only to creatures that pass through them.


Wall of ice

Walls of Flesh

Pulsing with blood and undulating with unseen muscles, walls made of living flesh are crafted by fiends, necromancers, and other twisted creatures. Occasionally such walls are part of a gigantic living dungeon, which might have its own purpose. Walls of living flesh are resilient to harm and have fast healing 5. If a 10-foot section is destroyed, the wall restores itself after 24 hours as long as the adjacent sections remain intact. Some flesh walls have eyes (which, in addition to their disturbing appearance, might be combined with divination magic to alert the dungeon's owner) and gaping maws that attempt to bite those who dare to touch them (attack +5, 1d6 damage).

Walls of Glass

Smooth and often delicate, walls made from glass can be clear, smoky (providing concealment), opaque (providing total concealment), or mirrored. They are easier to destroy than stone but include invisible dangers. Dealing enough damage to destroy a section of a glass wall shatters it, spraying shards into the adjacent area. Anyone adjacent to a wall of glass when it shatters takes 2d6 points of slashing damage from the razor-sharp fragments (Reflex DC 15 half). Some walls are formed of two sheets of glass around pockets of poisonous or acidic gas, or other noxious vapors, which are released if the glass breaks.

Walls of Ice

Common in the frostfell and in some underground environments, walls made from ice are easy to build and repair. They are also easy to destroy with the right tools. Fire damage overcomes the wall's hardness and deals half again as much damage (+50%). Acid deals one-quarter normal damage, while electricity and sonic effects deal full damage (sonic damage ignores the wall's hardness). Cold damage has no effect on an ice wall.

Walls of Insects

Thousands of minute insects swarming over one another form the basic shape of this unnerving wall. Any insects that fall away from the surface unerringly crawl back to join the mass. The wall is not solid, but crossing through requires a successful Strength check (see Table 7–1). Creatures who fail this check must end their movement and make another check the following round to move through the wall. Those who pass through the wall take 1d6 points of damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds (including the round in which they crossed the barrier). It is possible to remain within a wall of insects, taking damage and being subject to nausea each round. The wall otherwise behaves as a swarm (*MM* 315) with vermin traits, and it can be damaged by area effects. A destroyed section restores itself after 1 hour as long as neighboring sections remain undamaged. A *repel vermin* spell opens a 10-foot-wide space in the wall for 10 minutes.

Walls of Magma

Whether they are natural curtains of flowing lava pouring from the ceiling or vertical sheets suspended by magic, few walls are more deadly than those made of magma. Simple contact with a magma wall deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round of exposure. The wall is not solid, but crossing through requires a successful Strength check. Creatures

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

that fail this check must end their movement and make a successful check in the following round to move through the wall. Crossing a wall of magma deals 20d6 points of fire damage. It is possible to remain within a wall of magma, taking damage each round.

Dealing 30 points of cold damage in a single round to a wall of magma causes a 10-foot section of the wall to solidify into a wall of unworked stone (*DMG* 60) that is subject to spells and abilities that affect stone. A solidified section of wall returns to its magma state after 2d6 minutes, as long as molten sections are adjacent to it.

Only walls of magma that are created by magic can be dispelled. In such a case, the magma immediately forms a pool that is 5 feet in diameter for every 10 feet of the wall's height. See page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more rules about magma.

Walls of Ooze

Forever dripping and re-forming, walls of ooze primarily appear in dungeons built by alien or aberrant minds. An ooze wall's thickness and coloration prevents anyone from seeing more than vague shapes through the ooze, providing total concealment. The wall is acidic, dealing 2d6 points of acid damage to any creature or object that comes into contact with it. Opening a hole in a wall of ooze requires a successful DC 20 Strength check, but the passage is temporary and closes again after 1d4 rounds. A destroyed section of wall restores itself after 24 hours.

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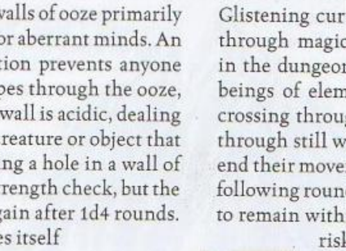
Walls of Plants

Made from knotted vines, leathery leaves, and living bark, plant walls are a favorite among druids. As long as the plants have an ample supply of water and light, the wall repairs any damage dealt to it at the rate of 5 points per day. *Plant growth* (PH 262) restores a damaged section to its full hit points immediately. Without an ample supply of water and light, a plant wall withers and dies within a month, and completely deteriorates after 3 months.

Some plant walls might instead be formed of fungus, which require only water to maintain, as long as some other food source is available. The corpses of monsters and unfortunate adventurers usually suffice.



Wall of webs

Walls of Souls

Only the most wicked and depraved creatures create walls from the moaning, wretched souls of their victims. A wall of souls is a vaporous, coiling, black mass of spirits, eternally bound and prevented from finding rest. No Strength check is required to pass through a wall of souls, but any creature that does so gains one negative level and takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage as the howling spirits assail them. A successful DC 20 Will save negates the Wisdom damage, and a successful DC 20 Fortitude save removes the negative level. A turning or rebuking check that affects at least 12 HD of undead calms one section of the wall for 1 minute, making it safe to pass through. Walls made of souls obscure vision, providing total concealment to those on the other side.

Dispel magic suppresses a wall of souls, creating an opening but also releasing the spirits, which attack all living things within 30 feet of the dispelled section (treat as passing through the wall). After 1d4 rounds, the spirits are recalled to the wall.

Walls of Water

Glistening curtains falling from the ceiling or shaped through magic, walls of water are a common feature in the dungeons of amphibian or aquatic creatures, or beings of elemental water. The wall is not solid, but crossing through requires a successful Swim check as through still water. Creatures who fail this check must end their movement and make a successful check in the following round to move through the wall. It is possible to remain within a wall of water, though drowning is a risk. Creatures that have the fire subtype take 2d6 points of damage each round they remain partially or wholly within the wall. A wall of water might also be tainted in some way, perhaps by poison or disease, or even consist of acid. It might also contain hostile inhabitants, such as a swarm of piranhas, a water elemental, or an ooze.

Walls of Webs

Spun by normal and monstrous spiders, walls made from webs are a common feature in the dungeons of drow and other subterranean creatures. In addition to being sticky, such walls are often infested with monstrous spiders and spider swarms. Breaking through a wall of webs requires a DC 20 Strength check. Anyone who fails the check by 5 or more becomes stuck and must make a successful DC 15 Strength check to pull free (a full-round action). Alternatively, a creature stuck in a wall of webs can attempt another DC 20 Strength check to emerge on the other side. A destroyed section of a wall of webs is repaired in 1 day as long as adjacent sections contain living spiders.

Occasionally, a wall of webs that has remained in place for a while calcifies into a harder substance, losing some of its stickiness but gaining hardness 5. Anyone who tries to climb a calcified wall gains a +5 circumstance bonus on the Climb check.

FLOORS

As with walls, floors come in a number of different types and with an array of qualities. However, the surface condition of a floor is more important than that of a wall, because PCs must travel over it. This necessity also hinders their ability to stay away from grabbing skeletal hands or blazing magma. Page 60 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* covers a wide variety of floor types and surface conditions that can be applied to nearly any floor material. With some modification, many of the wall types described above can be floor materials.

Floors of Air

A floor can be made of air, vapor, or swirling smoke that is magically supported. Being so strengthened allows it to support weight, like a typical stone floor, and it cannot be pushed through as a wall of air can. A transparent or translucent floor of air might allow creatures to look into the areas above or below them.

Floors of Bone

A floor made of mortared bones is as firm as a stone or wooden floor. However, the uneven shape of the bones can create patches that are harder to traverse. Treat a bone floor as light rubble (*DMG* 60); it might include some areas of difficult terrain (*PH* 148). Floors consisting of partially animated bone might exist, just like walls. Movement through such areas is hindered as if by an *entangle* spell. This unnatural terrain does not allow class features, such as the druid's root walker alternative class feature (page 9), to avoid the hindering effect. A turning or rebuking check can force an animated bone floor to cease its motion for 1 minute, making it safe to cross. One square is suppressed for every 4 HD of undead affected. A turning check that results in destruction instead destroys a section of bone floor.

Floors of Fire

Like a floor of air or smoke, a floor made of fire requires magic support or else rests atop a mundane floor. The effect of the fire is contained but can still harm creatures that travel across it; each round, it deals 1d6 points of fire damage to each creature on the floor.

Floors of Flesh

A floor made of flesh can sustain weight effectively, although its surface might be unpleasantly yielding in some areas or bulging with muscles and pulsing organs in others. Treat such areas as difficult terrain; patches of light rubble might exist where scales, eyes, and other irregularities are plentiful. Like flesh walls, floors built of flesh might contain maws that bite at passersby.

Floors of Glass

Floors can be made of solid glass, roughened to allow easy passage. Like floors of air, they might be transparent, allowing a view of areas on the other side. Some glass floors are polished smooth, making them slippery surfaces (*DMG* 60). Smashing glass floors has the same consequences as for glass walls, and they too might contain pockets of unpleasant gases or poisons.

Floors of Ice

Floors made of ice occur where ice walls do. They are often slippery, though rougher patches can exist that allow normal walking. Difficult terrain might appear in the form of deep snow, cracked surfaces, and ice stalagmites.

Floors of Insects

A floor made of insects needs to be supported magically in some way. Alternatively, the squirming carpet covers an ordinary floor of stone or earth. It is an unpleasant surface for walking, and footing is difficult. Treat a floor of insects as uneven flagstones for the purpose of movement (*DMG* 60). In addition, the crunching of bugs underfoot imposes a –5 penalty on Move Silently checks.

Floors of Magma

Floors made of magma need to be magically strengthened to support weight. Walking on such a surface deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round. Sometimes the magma has partially cooled, forming a hard crust that is safe to walk on (treat as light rubble), with occasional patches of open lava.

Floors of Ooze

A floor made of ooze either rests on another surface or is magically supported. The surface is disgustingly squishy, clinging to the feet of any who walk across it. Treat an ooze floor as shallow bog (*DMG* 88); the sucking sounds impose a –2 penalty on Move Silently checks while walking on it. Creatures in contact with an ooze floor also take 2d6 points of acid damage per round.

Floors of Souls

As with air, a floor made from souls must have magical support to hold weight.

Floors of Water

A floor made of water must be reinforced magically to support weight. Treat such a floor as a slippery surface. Some floors might contain areas of open water, which are nearly impossible to see (Spot DC 25). Such holes might drop a character into a water-filled level below, or simply act as drowning pits.

Floors of Webs

Floors made from sticky webbing are much like the sheet webs of monstrous spiders (*MM* 289) and can ensnare those who walk on them. Older, hardened webbing retains some of its stickiness and is treated as difficult terrain. Very old webbing is covered enough by dust and other dungeon debris to count as light rubble.

SPECIAL TERRAIN

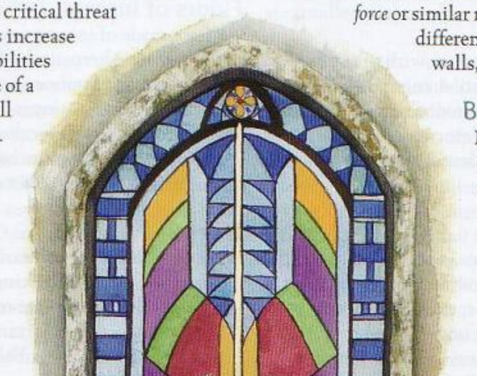
Because creatures can stand on them, floors can be made of more unusual materials that confer special advantages.

Blood Rock

Blood rock is a type of stone charged with necromantic energy that pulls at the life force of creatures standing on it. Its name comes from the streaks of blood-red mineral that run through it. Any creature standing on blood rock threatens to score a critical hit on a melee attack roll of natural 19 or 20 (unless its critical threat range is already higher). This increase does not stack with other abilities that increase the threat range of a weapon, such as a *keen edge* spell or the Improved Critical feat. Creatures that die on blood rock are quickly drained of all their fluids and become shriveled husks within a few days.

Deadwood

Ghostly gray timber spotted with tiny flecks of red, deadwood is created near sites where great necromantic energy has been released. Any trees nearby soon die and leave behind this frail wood. Undead creatures standing on deadwood gain +2 turn resistance and a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls, saves, and skill checks. This turn resistance stacks with any turn resistance the creature might already possess.


Glass door

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

Elementum

These floors are made of a solid type of energy (acid, cold, electricity, or fire) that looks similar to stone. A creature standing on elementum deals an extra 1d6 points of energy damage of the appropriate type with each successful melee attack. However, it also takes 2d6 points of the same type of energy damage each round it remains in contact with the floor.

Mage Stone

Highly sought after by spellcasters, mage stone has an iridescent hue that shimmers and seems to change with the light. Anyone who casts a spell or uses a spell-like ability while standing on mage stone gains a +1 bonus on caster level checks, and the DCs of saves against his spells and spell-like abilities increase by 1.

DOORS

A dungeon with walls made of ice or flesh demands doors a bit more exotic than those of simple wood or stone. The following new door types help to define unusual dungeons. Unless otherwise noted, these doors function in much the same way as those presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 60).

Substances such as air, magma, and insects are not typical for doors, since walls made of such substances can be penetrated, unless they are held together with *walls of force* or similar magic. Doors are often made of a different material from the surrounding walls, setting them off as portals.

Bone Doors

Ribs and spines make up the frame of this macabre door, and skulls form much of the body. Some doors of bone have the same effects as bone walls, but more often these portals are imbued with permanent *magic mouth* spells that ask for passwords. Such a door might also include an *alarm* spell that sets off loud shrieking if intruders attempt to bypass it.

Energy Doors

This gleaming door is made of searing energy, such as fire, burning cold, acid, or electricity. An observer can see the swirling energy within the door's rune-scribed frame. The door does not open; instead, the PCs must walk though its energy field to continue on. Such portals usually punctuate walls of more solid material. Choose any single energy descriptor. Anyone who passes through the door takes 2d6 points of damage of the chosen energy type. Such doors can be translucent (providing concealment) or opaque (for total concealment).

Flesh Doors

A flesh door might be a relatively thin membrane, resembling an eardrum or diaphragm, that responds to a particular vibration. Breaking through the membrane is fairly easy, by dealing piercing or slashing damage, but such intrusions often trigger alarms or traps. Some flesh portals resemble muscular valves, opening only under a particular set of circumstances, such as a *mind blast* or other stunning effect, or when dealt a particular type of damage. Instead of breaking a valve door, creatures can attempt to squeeze through with a successful Strength or Escape Artist check, as though it were stuck.

Glass Doors

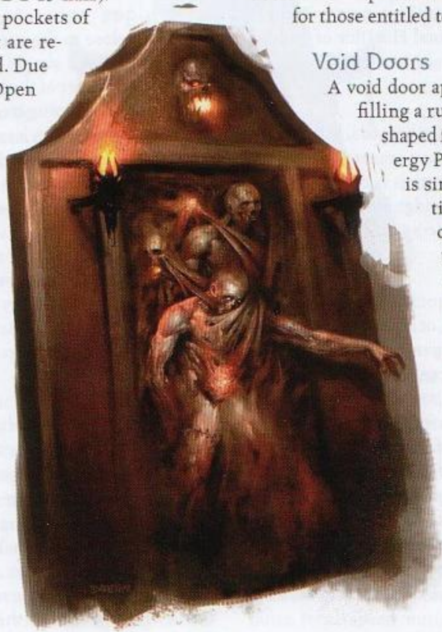
Doors made from glass are used primarily to achieve a desired aesthetic effect. They are usually clear, to show off the contents of the enclosed space, and always carefully balanced. As with walls, doors made of glass can shatter when broken, though being thinner than walls, they produce fewer deadly shards. Anyone adjacent to a door of glass when it shatters takes 1d6 points of slashing damage (Reflex DC 15 half).

Glass doors can also contain pockets of poisonous or acidic gas that are released if the door is shattered. Due to the glass's transparency, Open Lock checks to unlock a glass door receive a +2 circumstance bonus. However, the locking mechanism might be rendered invisible to avoid standing out (in which case this bonus does not apply).

Golem Doors

A truly bizarre—and truly secure—creation, a golem door is carefully crafted from pieces of iron and adamantine. It opens only with the proper key or when so commanded by its creator. Such a door shares many of the traits of an iron golem. It does not have hardness but instead has damage reduction 10/adamantine. It is immune to all forms of magic, with some exceptions. Rusting effects, such as a *rusting grasp* spell, deal damage to a golem door normally, as if it were a ferrous creature. Electricity damage weakens a golem door temporarily; for 3 rounds, the DCs to open or break such are door are reduced by 5. Fire damage cancels this effect and fortifies the door, increasing open and break DCs by 5.

If someone tries to open a golem door without the proper key or command word, the door belches forth a cloud of deadly poison in the square immediately outside the door and in squares adjacent to that square (inhaled, Fort DC 19, initial damage 1d4 Con, secondary damage 3d4 Con). The cloud is 20 feet tall. A golem door can produce a poison cloud once per hour. It dissipates after 1 round.



Zombie door

Illus. by Daarken

Ice Doors

Like glass doors, those made of ice are often clear, delicately sculpted, and easily damaged, so they rarely secure critical areas. Due to an ice door's transparent nature, Open Lock checks to unlock it receive a +2 circumstance bonus on the roll. Fire damage can readily destroy an ice door, just as it does a wall made of ice, and other forms of energy act as they would on an ice wall.

Plant Doors

Like walls of living vegetation, plant doors are a favorite among druids. A plant door has the same requirements and characteristics as a wall of plants, although it is thinner. Plant doors made of fungus also exist. Sometimes plant doors do not open in the normal way but form passages for those entitled to pass.

Void Doors

A void door appears as inky, liquid blackness filling a rusted door frame. A thin curtain shaped from the stuff of the Negative Energy Plane, this door does not open but is simply passed through. The negative energy has a strange effect on the senses: Anyone reaching through is unable to sense anything beyond, even the floor. Neither sound nor light can pass through a void door, making it difficult to determine what lies on the other side.

More powerful versions of void doors also exist. Some deal damage to creatures that pass through, and exceptionally dangerous versions bestow negative levels.

Water Lock Doors

This circular bronze barrier is inscribed with Aquan runes. It has a latch set in its middle, and it is cool to the touch. This door serves as an "airlock" that holds back water. On the other side might be a subterranean lake, an artificial pool, or even a portal to the Elemental Plane of Water. Opening such a door could flood an entire dungeon level. The area beyond could be flooded or dry (having already been emptied)—simple observation does not reveal any hints, other than condensation on a cold surface.

Releasing the water produces a torrent that can sweep PCs off their feet; each character in its path must succeed on a DC 20 Strength check or be pushed 4d20 feet and take 3d6 points of damage. On a successful check, a character holds his ground and takes no damage. Closing a door through which water is rushing requires a successful DC

25 Strength check. After the initial push, water continues to flow beyond the door, creating a shallow or deep pool (*DMG* 64).

Zombie Doors

Made from corpses that have been stitched together, zombie doors are a favorite of necromancers. The bodies retain their limbs and have a reach of 5 feet, lashing at anyone within reach who does not speak the proper command word (attack +2, 1d6+2 points of bludgeoning damage). A turning or rebuking check that affects at least 4 HD of undead deactivates a zombie door for 1 minute, allowing it to be opened or closed easily. If the result of a turning check is destruction, the door crumbles. If the result of a rebuking check is command, the door attacks only those targets designated by its new master. Zombie doors do not count toward the total Hit Dice of undead a spellcaster can control.

BRIDGES

Spanning chasms, rivers, or other hazards, bridges are common in many underground environments. Bridges can be made of many of the same materials as other dungeon features. The following exotic bridge types add to the simple types in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 64).

Bone Bridges

Bone bridges might be crafted from thousands of small bones, like doors, walls, and floors, or occur naturally when a very large creature's remains span a chasm or stream. Although sturdy, bone bridges can disintegrate quickly if damaged. If any 5-foot-square section of bridge takes enough damage to reduce it below half its full normal hit points, it has a 50% chance of collapsing. Whenever a section collapses, it deals damage equal to half its full normal hit points to all adjacent sections, requiring collapse checks of those sections. The failure of a single section might well cause an entire bone bridge to collapse. Creatures adjacent to either end of the faulty section can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save or a DC 20 Tumble or Jump check to leap to safety.

Conjured Bridges

Conjured bridges are made and supported by magic, allowing a wide variety of types and shapes. They are often temporary, lasting only a few minutes after being activated by a keystone or command word at the chasm's edge. Although such bridges cannot be destroyed by physical damage, they can be dispelled.

Force Bridges

Bridges made from permanent *walls of force* are invisible and can be discovered only through careful exploration. Dispersing powder such as dust or flour can also reveal such a bridge's dimensions. While they cannot be dispelled, force bridges are vulnerable to *disintegrate*.

Ice Bridges

Most ice bridges have a slightly textured surface and include low walls (*DMG* 64) at the edges, so they can be crossed at normal speed without penalty. Those attempting to run must make successful DC 10 Balance checks or fall prone, sliding 5 feet in the direction they were moving. Fire damage readily melts an ice bridge, in the same way it affects walls of ice, and other types of energy damage affect it as they do other ice structures (see page 21). Like bone bridges, ice bridges are brittle and can collapse if damaged. For every 5-foot-square section of bridge destroyed, a cumulative 20% chance exists that the rest of the bridge shatters. More hazardous kinds of ice bridges are described on page 52 of *Dungeon Master's Guide II*.

Log Bridges

Dungeons close to the surface (or formed of surface features) might use a simple uprooted tree or log to span a gap. If the diameter of the tree is 5 feet or less, its rounded surface makes crossing treacherous, requiring a successful DC 10 Balance check to move at half speed (see *PH* 67 for consequences of failed Balance checks). Trees with a diameter greater than 5 feet do not require a Balance check as long as the traveler moves at half speed or slower; attempting to move at full speed requires a DC 10 Balance check. Creatures must cross a log bridge in single file; when friendly travelers heading in opposite directions meet on such a bridge, they must move carefully past each other (successful DC 10 Balance check from each). Truly enormous logs might negate all these penalties.

Swinging Bridges

Although not exactly a bridge, a rope, vine, or chain is a common if dangerous means of crossing natural pits or rivers. A properly positioned swinging bridge must be anchored over the chasm and be of adequate length to reach both sides. Crossing a swinging bridge requires a successful Jump check, making a long jump whose length is half the width of the pit. If the check fails by less than 5, the character lacks the momentum to reach the other side, swinging back to the starting point. If the check fails by 5 or more, the character's grip on the rope slips while above the pit.

Web Bridges

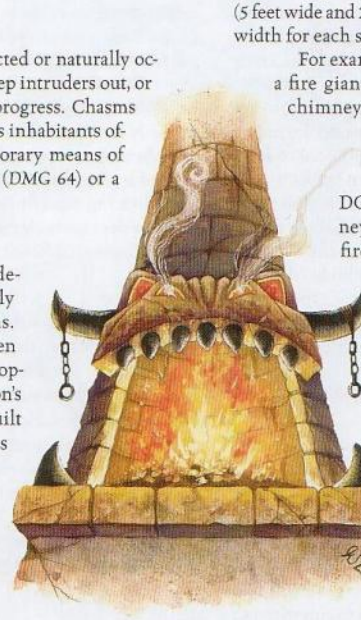
Crafted by monstrous spiders, these bridges are often difficult to cross, especially if the webs are still inhabited. They are considered difficult terrain and require a successful DC 15 Strength check to move at all. If the check fails, the character is stuck and wastes the action pulling free. If the check fails by 5 or more, the character becomes ensnared in the webs and must make a successful DC 20 Strength check as a full-round action to escape. Older webs can become calcified, losing their stickiness (while remaining difficult terrain) and gaining hardness 5. The interconnected strands of a web bridge make it especially susceptible to damage. If any 5-foot-square section of the bridge is destroyed, all creatures on the bridge must make successful DC 10 Balance checks or fall through the weakened webs.

CHASMS

Whether intentionally constructed or naturally occurring, chasms or open pits keep intruders out, or at least severely impede their progress. Chasms that might hinder the dungeon's inhabitants often include some kind of temporary means of crossing, such as a drawbridge (*DMG* 64) or a conjured bridge (see above).

Constructed Chasms

Built as part of the dungeon's design, such chasms have clearly defined edges and set depths. Those designed for defense often include a movable bridge on the opposite side for use by the dungeon's occupants. Some chasms are built for vertical travel by creatures that fly, with lower areas opening up into other chambers or levels. Occasionally a pit is constructed as an oubliette to confine prisoners, often with a cover to prevent escape.



Fire chimney

Natural Chasms

Caused by erosion or a seismic event, a naturally occurring chasm has rough, uncontrolled edges and a variable depth. Some parts of a fissure might be only 20 or 30 feet deep, while others might drop hundreds of feet into darkness. Some natural chasms open up into other chambers below, including underground lakes or vast pits filled with stalagmites. If the floor surface is earthen, the edges of a natural chasm are notoriously unstable: Creatures adjacent to the edge must make successful DC 5 Balance checks each round to avoid slipping on the crumbling ground and falling in.

CHUTES AND CHIMNEYS

Chutes and chimneys are less common forms of vertical transport in dungeons because they are difficult or dangerous to use. A chute is intentionally designed for travel, but chimneys are not, and thus they are less accommodating and more hazardous.

Chimneys

Little more than a narrow pit, a chimney might be a natural feature or built to allow air flow. It can be ascended or descended with a Climb check. The DC for this check is normal for that of the surface of the chimney. Often a natural chimney is slippery, increasing the DCs of Climb checks by 5 as normal. The Climb check DC is reduced by 10 if the climber can brace himself against opposite walls (*PH* 69). For a Small or Medium creature, this means that the chimney can be no wider than 5 feet in one dimension (5 feet wide and 20 feet long, for example). Add 5 feet to this width for each size category larger than Medium.

For example, a human rogue, having just robbed a fire giant's treasure, attempts to escape down a chimney with adequate handholds that is 10 feet wide, 10 feet long, and 40 feet deep. The fire giant's guards are chasing her. While the rogue must make successful DC 15 Climb checks to descend the chimney, the Climb check DC for the pursuing fire giants is only 5 because they can brace against the opposite wall.

Fire Chimney: Similar to the basic chimney, this version is full of smoke from a burning fire at its base. Any air-breathing creature climbing through the chimney must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) each round or spend the round doing nothing but hacking and coughing. A character who fails this save for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

The bottom of this chimney also poses a risk due to the fire. Anyone falling into the fire takes 2d6 points of fire damage in addition to the falling damage. Catching on fire (*DMG* 303) is a real possibility as well. Climbing into or out of the chimney at the fire's level requires a successful DC 15 Climb or Tumble check to avoid taking 1d6 points of fire damage and possibly catching fire.

Chutes

A chute can provide fast passage, but characters sliding down at full speed must make a successful DC 10 Tumble check at the bottom to avoid taking damage. Those who fail take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage for every 20 feet descended. (Most chutes travel some amount of horizontal distance as well, but that distance is not counted when calculating damage from an uncontrolled descent.) A successful DC 10 Balance check allows a controlled descent at the character's normal land speed. Those who fail this check quickly accelerate to full speed and risk taking damage for the remaining distance as noted above. Descending a typical chute of metal, wood, or stone is done at a speed of 90 feet per round. Ascending such a chute requires a successful DC 15 Climb check. Adding water or oil to a chute's surface makes it slippery, increasing its slide speed by 20 feet per round and the DCs of Climb checks by 5. Chutes that extend farther horizontally than

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

they do vertically do not deal damage to creatures sliding down, and they can be climbed with successful DC 10 Climb checks.

To make a controlled descent down a chute of this sort requires a successful DC 15 Climb check. Success enables you to descend safely at your base climbing speed.

Chutes used by dungeon occupants often have materials at the bottom to help cushion the landing, such as straw, cloth, nets, or even garbage (reduce falling damage by up to 3d6 points). Chutes intended only to hinder intruders often empty into other hazards, such as a pool of fetid water, a snake-filled room, or a pit of sharp spikes.

Flesh Chute: This is a giant canvas stitched from humanoid flesh. Full sliding speed is 120 feet per round and requires a DC 12 Tumble check at the bottom. Because the walls of the chute are flexible, though, making a controlled descent requires only a successful DC 5 Balance check. Flesh chutes are relatively weak and easily damaged. Unless surrounded by other solid materials, any damage to a flesh chute causes it to tear, with a 25% chance of dropping those in the chute into an unintended space.

Sometimes a flesh chute is the actual gullet of a living creature. Such passages are less fragile than stitched chutes; treat them as flesh walls for the purpose of dealing damage. A gullet might also deal acid and bludgeoning damage to those inside.

Sand Chute: This chute works like an hourglass. Its upper portion looks like a massive pit of sand. When sufficient mass is added, the sand begins to run through the chute, forming a sinkhole that deposits the matter placed upon it into another large sand pile on the surface below. Treat the pit as quicksand (*DMG* 88), but those who slip below the surface travel down the chute at a speed of 1 foot per round for each 10 pounds of weight. Reaching the bottom of a sand chute does not deal damage to the traveler, but air-breathing creatures risk suffocation during the passage. Climbing up a sand chute is nearly impossible, requiring a successful DC 40 Climb check each round.

NATURAL FEATURES

While most dungeon features are constructed and specifically placed, some naturally occurring features might exist in unfinished spaces or be retained intentionally for their aesthetic qualities. Earthquakes, collapses, and neglect might explain their presence as well.

Cave-ins and Collapses

The result of a cave-in, a collapse makes an unstable environment and an effective barrier. Typically, a collapsed area is full of loose earth, tumbled stones, and unfinished rock, though the surrounding environment can greatly alter the contents. Some dungeon dwellers might intentionally trigger a collapse as a last line of defense. A collapse might entirely block a passage, or it might create an expanse of dense rubble (*DMG* 90). Digging through a collapse is a laborious undertaking. Each square contains approximately 2,000 pounds of earth and stone. Characters can clear rocks and debris equal to five times their heavy load limit per minute. However, without properly reinforcing the weakened ceiling, a cumulative 10% chance exists of another collapse for each 5-foot square cleared in this way. Proper support includes beams and wood bracing. Hastily installing these supports takes 10 minutes per square cleared. For more details, see Cave-Ins and Collapses (*DMG* 66).

Flowstone

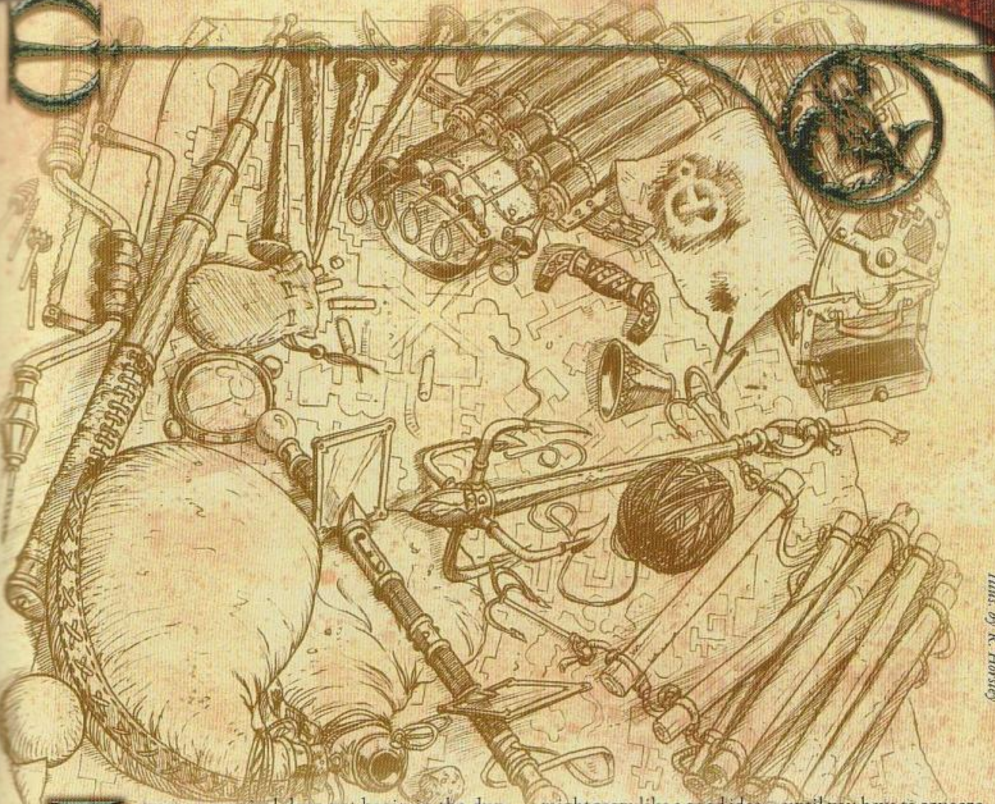
Deposited by mineral-laden water, flowstone can, over many years, cover the walls and floors of a dungeon with smooth, damp layers of rock. In ancient dungeons, flowstone might engulf entire corridors or conceal doors and other features. Flowstone can be broken and chipped away like normal stone, though it is a bit softer (hardness 6). Areas of flowstone are not difficult terrain, but they are considered lightly obstructed for the purpose of making Tumble checks (*PH* 84). Wet flowstone is especially slick, rendering areas slippery and impeding movement and Climb checks accordingly.

Stalactites

Formed by the deposits of mineral-laden water dripping from the ceiling, stalactites are long "icicles" of stone. A stalactite can be made to fall with a sharp blow to the base that deals enough damage to overcome its hardness (typically 8). The damage caused by a falling stalactite depends on its size, varying from 1d6 to as much as 8d6 points of damage for a large stalactite that falls from a great distance. (See Falling Objects, *DMG* 303, for more information.) Creatures occupying the square in which a falling stalactite lands can avoid the damage entirely with a successful DC 15 Reflex save.

Stalagmites

While stalactites hang down from the ceiling, stalagmites grow up from the ground. Large stalagmites can block a path or interfere with movement, while fields of tiny stalagmites might render an area difficult terrain; especially sharp stalagmites are treated as caltrops (*PH* 126). Passing through a square with these tiny rock formations destroys them and renders the square safe to traverse normally. Falling onto stalagmites works much the same way as falling onto pit spikes.



Illus. by R. Horsley

Dungeon survival does not begin in the dungeon. It begins back in the city, when you start shopping for an upcoming expedition. As a smart adventurer, you should select your equipment based on your destination and the likely obstacles you will face. If you carry the same pile of gear into every situation, you are a prime candidate to face the day when an item that costs 5 gold pieces would have saved your life.

PACKING TIPS

When packing for a dungeon trip, consider the following factors. Not all of them apply to every situation.

Weight: You have an encumbrance limit, but most of the time, you do not want to be anywhere near it. You should not carry so much gear that your equipment puts you in a load category higher than your armor. In fact, you should carry less than the maximum to keep you in the same category, or items you accumulate during the trip will push you into a heavier load. If everything you need weighs too much, get a *bag of holding*, a *portable hole*, a cohort, a follower, a pack animal, or a hired lackey to tote your stuff, depending on what your budget will bear.

Volume: Carrying large objects can be inconvenient or dangerous. For example, bringing a 10-foot pole might seem like a good idea—until you have to squeeze through a narrow, winding passageway. Magical extradimensional storage is the best way to go for items that are necessary but unwieldy. After all, a follower will not be able to take the pole through the tight corridor, either.

Necessity: To decide if a large or heavy item is truly necessary, ask yourself two questions. First, how likely are you to need the item? Second, if the item turns out to be needed, how likely are you to die from not having it? An object that will be needed infrequently but whose absence could kill you should take priority over an item that might be used more often but is not crucial to your survival. Remember, your first priority is to come back alive.

Cooperation: Find out whether an ally plans to bring the same item, and whether he would mind sharing it if needed. If an item can be passed around a group, there is little reason for each member to carry his own.

Efficiency: Is the item the most space-efficient way to handle the anticipated problem? Often, a smaller, more elegant item is available, though its price might be higher.

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Table 2–1: Equipment

Dungeon Gear

Item	Cost	Weight
Collapsible pole	20 gp	8 lb.
Drill		
Adamantine	200 gp	1 lb.
Iron	10 gp	1 lb.
Wood	5 gp	1 lb.
Finder's chalk	5 gp	—
Finder's glass	400 gp	1/2 lb.
Flotation bladder	2 gp	2 lb.
Flour pouch	1 sp	—
Grappling hook, mithral	1,000 gp	2 lb.
Grappling ladder	40 gp	8 lb.
Silk and mithral	650 gp	4 lb.
Hacksaw		
Adamantine	600 gp	1 lb.
Common	5 gp	1 lb.
Superior	20 gp	1 lb.
Lard	2 sp	10 lb.
Listening cone	8 sp	1 lb.
Magnet	20 gp	2 lb.
Manacles, adamantine	2,000 gp	5 lb.
Periscope, hand	50 gp	2 lb.
Rubber ball	3 gp	—
Rubbing kit	5 gp	1 lb.
Spike, iron	1 sp	1 lb.
Twine, roll (50 feet)	1 sp	—
Wand bracer	300 gp	5 lb.

Weapon and Armor Modifications

Item	Cost
Hilt hollow	+200 gp
Oil chamber	+1,000 gp
Sanctified	+50 gp
Wand chamber	+100 gp

Alchemical Items

Item	Cost	Weight
Acid neutralizer	50 gp	1 lb.
Bottled air	50 gp	—
Firmament stone	110 gp	1/2 lb.
Ghostwall shellac, bottle	150 gp	1 lb.
Lava stone	24 gp	—
Greater	144 gp	1 lb.
Lockslick, can	180 gp	1/2 lb.
Trollbane, vial	90 gp	—

EQUIPMENT

Dungeoneering equipment that's not magical comes in three basic categories: mundane gear, modifications to armor and weapons, and alchemical items.

MUNDANE DUNGEON GEAR

There are basically two types of dungeoneering equipment: highly specialized items that fulfill a narrow purpose, and ordinary objects that can be used creatively. Both are crucial to any adventurer's standard gear. The following mundane items can be put to good use in dungeons.

Collapsible Pole: This 2-foot-long wooden pole is composed of six telescoping sections that allow it to extend to a length of 12 feet. Each section can be turned to lock it in place to prevent the pole from collapsing prematurely. The pole can be partially extended to 4 feet, 6 feet, 8 feet, or 10 feet. You can use the pole to jam doors, pass objects across pits, spring traps, or serve any other needed function. The thinnest section of a collapsible pole can be inserted into a second pole, creating a sturdy pole of up to 22 feet in length. Expanding or collapsing a pole is a full-round action.

Drill: This simple hand drill bores small holes in wood, metal, or stone. As a standard action, you can use the drill to create a hole in an object if the drill can ignore the object's hardness (see below). The hole is 1 inch deep and 1 inch in diameter. Any Search checks or Spot checks through the hole are made at a –5 penalty. Listen checks through the hole are made at a –2 penalty.

There are three types of drills. A wood drill ignores up to 5 points of hardness when drilling. An iron drill, commonly used on metal or stone, ignores up to 10 points of hardness. An adamantine drill, used on only the most difficult surfaces, ignores up to 20 points of hardness. A drill that does not ignore enough hardness of an object cannot bore a hole in that object. Standard drills become dull after 20 rounds of use; masterwork drills last for 100 rounds. New bits can be purchased for 10% of the cost of the drill.

Finder's Chalk: Marks made by this red chalk fade from casual view after 1 minute, allowing you to mark dungeon surfaces secretly. The chalk lets you keep track of what areas you have and have not visited without alerting wandering creatures to your presence. To detect a simple mark, such as a line or an X, make a successful DC 25 Search check. To detect more complex marks, make a successful DC 40 Search check. A finder's glass (see below) improves your ability to detect the chalk marks. *True seeing* (PH 296) lets you detect the marks without making a Search check.

One piece of finder's chalk covers a 10-foot-square wall with marks.

Finder's Glass: A finder's glass is a 3-inch-diameter circular disc of red glass set in a copper frame. It can be held in front of your eye or inserted over the aperture of a standard bullseye lantern, causing it to emit dim red light. When you look through a finder's glass, you gain a +30 alchemical bonus on your Search checks to find or read marks made by finder's chalk. If the glass is used in conjunction with a lantern, all creatures in the area of bright illumination gain a +20 alchemical bonus on their Search checks to find or read such marks.

Flotation Bladder: This item, used to aid in swimming, consists of two sealed, oiled leather sacks attached with a piece of rope. Each sack can be inflated by blowing air into it through a small metal valve as a full-round action. Once inflated and placed under the arms, a flotation bladder grants a +4 bonus on Swim checks to rise to the surface or remain at the surface. The bladder also imposes a –4 penalty on Swim checks to descend deeper into the

Heroes equip themselves for another dungeon adventure water. Additional bladders do not grant further bonuses on Swim checks, but the penalties stack.

Flour Pouch: This deceptively simple burlap satchel of flour is tied loosely on purpose. While it could be used to bake a loaf of bread on a particularly long expedition, its true purpose is to locate invisible opponents. You can attempt to strike an invisible opponent with a flour pouch as a touch attack. You still must pinpoint the target or choose a space to attack into, and the normal miss chance for total concealment applies. If you hit the target, the pouch bursts open, spilling white flour over a portion of the invisible creature. You can also throw a flour pouch as a splash weapon; any invisible creature standing in the space struck is covered in flour, as are all other creatures within 5 feet.

Coating an invisible creature in flour lets you keep track of its position and reduces the miss chance to 20% (instead of the normal 50% for total concealment). While an invisible creature is coated in flour, its bonus on Hide checks is reduced to +10 if the creature is moving, or to +20 if it is not moving (*PH* 76). If the creature moves through water, is subjected to a *gust of wind*, or spends a full-round action brushing the flour off, all the flour is removed from its body.

Grappling Hook, Mithral: A mithral grappling hook is lighter than a standard hook but just as strong, and it can be thrown farther. If the hook is attached to a silk rope (not a hempen one), any Use Rope check to seat the hook is made at a DC equal to 10 + 1 per 20 feet thrown, to a maximum DC of 20 for a hook thrown 200 feet.

Grappling Ladder: This premade hemp rope ladder has two small steel grappling hooks on either end. Throwing a grappling ladder is like throwing a grappling hook, only more difficult. The Use Rope check to seat the ladder is made at a DC equal to 15 + 3 per 10 feet thrown. A DC 10 Climb check is required to scale a grappling ladder.

The price and weight in Table 2–1 is for a 10-foot ladder, but longer ladders are commonly available. For each additional 10 feet of the ladder, add 35 gp to the cost and 6 pounds to the weight.

Grappling Ladder, Silk and Mithral: The finest grappling ladders are made of silk rope and fashioned with two tiny mithral hooks. They function as standard grappling ladders but are easier to seat; the Use Rope check is made at a DC equal to 13 + 2 per 10 feet thrown. The standard +2 circumstance bonus on Use Rope checks for silk rope does not apply.

The price and weight in Table 2–1 is for a 10-foot ladder, but longer ladders are commonly available. For each additional 10 feet of the ladder, add 150 gp to the cost and 3 pounds to the listed weight.

Hacksaw: This blade is designed to cut through thin metal. It ignores the hardness of standard metal objects (excluding exotic metals such as mithral or adamantine), but it deals only 1 point of damage per 2 rounds of sawing. A common blade lasts for 20 rounds, while a superior blade lasts for 40 rounds.

You can also buy a hacksaw with an adamantine blade, which ignores hardness 25 or lower. The saw also cuts faster, dealing 1 point of damage per round.

Lard: Simple cooking lard can be a great aid to dungeoneers. You can spread it on the floor to make a slippery area similar to that created by a *grease* spell (*PH* 237). Applying lard in this manner takes 1 minute, but the coated area remains slippery for 1 hour. You can also take 1 minute to coat yourself in lard, which grants you a +5 circumstance bonus on Escape Artist checks and on grapple checks made to resist or escape a grapple or pin. The bonus lasts for 10 minutes.

Listening Cone: This iron cone can be placed against a surface, such as a door, to aid in Listen checks made through the surface. The DC for listening through a door when using a cone increases by 2 (rather than 5), and the DC for listening through stone walls increases by 5 (rather than 15). Listening cones have no effect if not used against a surface.

Magnet: This magnetized bar of metal picks up small objects of ferrous metal, such as iron or steel. The magnet can lift up to 2 pounds of metal if touched to the object in question. It can also attract metal objects weighing up to one-third of a pound at a distance of 1 foot. You can tie a magnet to the end of a piece of twine and lower it into a pit to pick up objects or manipulate levers. You can also lash a magnet to the end of a pole and slide it under doors to retrieve items.

Manacles, Adamantine: Intended for chaining powerful dungeon monsters, these manacles can be broken only with a successful DC 52 Strength check. They have 15 hit points and hardness 20. Otherwise, adamantine manacles function as masterwork manacles (*PH* 126).

Periscope, Hand: This device consists of two steel mirrors placed opposite each other at angles, separated by a metal tube about 2 feet in length. The periscope allows you to peer around corners without revealing your presence. Because only the end of the periscope protrudes, you can make a Hide check (with a +7 bonus) for the item to determine if the creatures you spy upon notice it. The area visible through the periscope is cone-shaped and begins in the space immediately around the corner. While looking through the periscope, you take a –8 penalty on Spot checks to detect creatures not in the cone-shaped area.

Rubber Ball: A bouncing rubber ball can give you an idea of what lies down a corridor. Simply throw the ball at a space or grid intersection as you would throw a splash weapon, though with a range increment of 30 feet. No matter where the ball lands, it bounces directly away from you, traveling half the distance it was first thrown. Then it lands and bounces again, covering half the distance of the previous bounce. The ball continues in this manner until it makes a bounce that would be less than 5 feet in length, at which time it stops bouncing and begins rolling. If the ball strikes a solid object, it reverses direction and continues rolling.

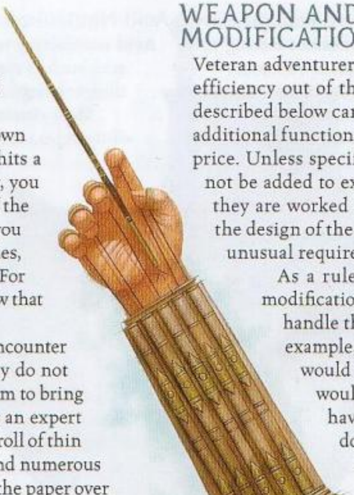
Thus, you can throw a rubber ball down a corridor to see whether or not it hits a wall and returns to you. Either way, you learn something about the length of the hallway. When you throw the ball, you can also listen carefully for other cues, especially if the ball does not return. For example, if you hear a splash, you know that a liquid obstacle lies ahead.

Rubbing Kit: Adventurers often encounter ancient carvings and runes that they do not understand. A rubbing kit allows them to bring a copy of the runes back to town for an expert to translate later. The kit consists of a roll of thin paper 20 feet long and 1 foot wide, and numerous sticks of fine charcoal. Simply place the paper over the carvings and rub it with charcoal. Creating an accurate copy requires 1 minute for each foot of paper used (in length). Rubbing more quickly reduces the time to a full-round action for the same amount of paper, but it adds 10 to the DC of any check related to interpreting the rubbing, such as a Decipher Script check.

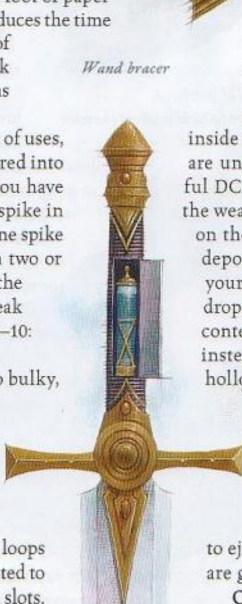
Spike, Iron: Iron spikes have a variety of uses, though they are most commonly hammered into door frames to keep the doors shut. If you have a hammer or mallet, you can pound one spike in place as a full-round action. A door with one spike in it is considered stuck, and a door with two or more spikes in it is considered locked for the purpose of breaking it down. (For the break DCs for stuck and locked doors, see Table 3–10: Doors, *DMG* 61).

Twine: For situations where rope is too bulky, simple twine is a good substitute. It can be tied around smaller objects and takes up less room. Twine has 1 hit point and hardness 0.

Wand Bracer: This metal forearm band takes up space on the body as a bracer and can hold up to five wands. Thin loops of thread fit over your fingers, each connected to a spring mechanism on one of the wand slots. If your hand is empty, you can flex a finger as a swift action to cause the wand of your choice to spring into your grasp. You still must activate the wand as a standard action. Replacing a wand in the sheath is tricky and requires a full-round action. Most adventurers just drop the first wand to the ground (a free action) when they need a different one.



Wand bracer



Hilt hollow

WEAPON AND ARMOR MODIFICATIONS

Veteran adventurers always look for ways to get more efficiency out of their equipment. The modifications described below can be added to equipment to provide additional functions, with a corresponding increase in price. Unless specified otherwise, modifications cannot be added to existing weapons or armor. Instead, they are worked into the initial construction, with the design of the equipment compensating for their unusual requirements.

As a rule of thumb, weapons cannot have modifications unless they have a solid hilt or handle that is at least 6 inches in length. For example, a longsword, crossbow, or trident would qualify, but a spiked chain or sling would not. Most pieces of equipment can have only one modification, though double weapons can support two (one on each end). None of the modifications below add significantly to the weight of the item to which they are applied. In fact, weaponsmiths must add weight to a weapon's blade to maintain balance when creating a hollow space within the handle.

Hilt Hollow (Weapon): This modification is simply a hollow container hidden inside a weapon, usually in the hilt. Creatures that are unaware of the hollow must make a successful DC 30 Search check to find it. While holding the weapon, you merely press a tiny button hidden on the crosspiece, and the hollow springs open, depositing its contents into your other hand. If your other hand is full, you can simultaneously drop your weapon (as a free action) as the hollow's contents are ejected, leaving you holding them instead of the weapon. Either way, emptying the hollow is a swift action, and loading it is a full-round action.

The hollow is about 6 inches long and 1 inch in diameter, making it large enough for a single vial of potion. Spellcasters often store material components in hilt hollows, allowing them to eject the components into their hand if they are grappled.

Oil Chamber (Weapon, Armor, or Shield): An oil chamber is a tiny vessel attached to the hilt of a weapon, the inside of a shield, or either forearm of a suit of armor. You can fill the chamber with any magic or alchemical oil as a full-round action. Sealing the oil inside the chamber creates pressure, such that opening the chamber again (a swift action) causes the oil to spray out over the armor or weapon. In this way, you can

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apply the oil to your equipment quickly and efficiently. You cannot open a full chamber without having the oil spray, however, so filling the chamber is a commitment to applying the oil to that armor or weapon at some point in the future.

Filling an oil chamber with poison is a bad idea. Whoever is wielding or wearing the equipment is automatically exposed to the poison as it sprays out. However, it is safe to fill a chamber with trollbane (see page 37)—assuming that you are not a troll.

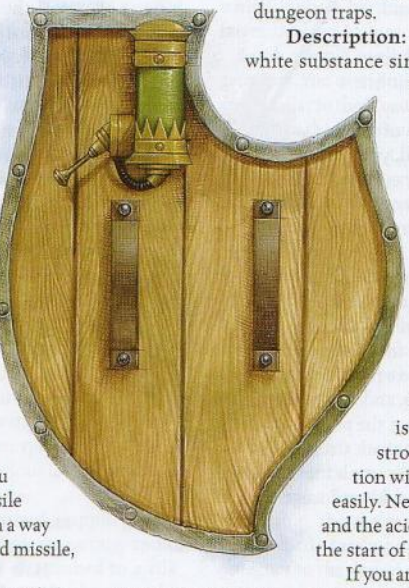
Unlike most modifications, an oil chamber can be added to an existing weapon, shield, or armor fairly easily. Weapons and shields can support one oil chamber, but a suit of armor can hold two (one on each forearm). You can build an oil chamber into a missile weapon, such as a crossbow, in such a way that the oil sprayed affects the loaded missile, rather than the weapon.

Sanctified (Armor or Shield): While most clerics adorn their equipment with images associated with their faith, sanctified armor is actually engraved with the holy or unholy symbol of a religion. This modification makes the armor a legitimate divine focus for divine spellcasters of that faith. Normally, a divine focus does not have to be in hand to cast a spell, so a sanctified shield is a matter of personal style for clerics who prefer a shield to an amulet. Of course, a sanctified shield can be useful as a backup in case your primary focus is lost or damaged.

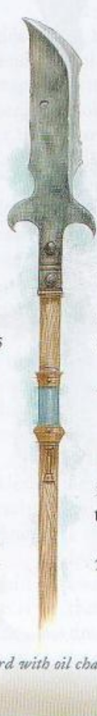
Wand Chamber (Weapon or Shield): A wand chamber is a thin, cylindrical slot on the handle of a weapon or the edge of a shield that can hold a single wand. When a wand is loaded in the chamber, it is considered ready and can be activated without having to drop the weapon or shield. Changing the wand in the chamber is a full-round action.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Experienced dungeoneers know the value of alchemy. Nonmagical solutions to common dungeon problems remain effective in antimagic areas, and they cannot be detected or dispelled by enemy spellcasters. While few adventurers would eschew magic entirely, a good selection of alchemically derived tools can work wonders.



Shield with oil chamber



Halberd with oil chamber

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Acid Neutralizer

Acid neutralizer reduces the strength of nonmagical acid, such as the type found in a variety of common dungeon traps.

Description: Acid neutralizer is a slippery white substance similar in appearance to soap. It is made and sold in fist-sized lumps wrapped in brown waxed paper. When dropped in acid, the neutralizer foams and fizzes, turbulently churning the acid for 5 seconds. Neutralized acid takes on the appearance of weakly colored water, retaining only a slight tint and no odor whatsoever.

Activation: To use a lump of acid neutralizer, just drop it into a vessel containing acid (a free action). Unwrapping the lump is not necessary, because any acid strong enough to warrant neutralization will eat through the paper wrapping easily. Neutralization requires a full round, and the acid will remain at full strength until the start of your next turn.

If you are immersed in acid while carrying lumps of acid neutralizer, they immediately activate unless stored in a stronger container, such as a metal tin. Being splashed with acid might activate the neutralizer if you keep it exposed, rather than stored in a jar.

Effect: If you drop one lump of acid neutralizer into a container holding up to 10 cubic feet of nonmagical acid, the acid is permanently weakened such that contact with the acid deals no damage. Complete immersion in neutralized acid deals only 5d6 points of damage per round (instead of the usual 10d6 points). Acid that has been neutralized in this manner no longer gives off toxic fumes (*DMG* 302). Larger volumes of acid require additional doses; two lumps are needed to neutralize a 20-cubic-foot vat of acid.

Neutralizer is far less effective against magic acids, which regain their full acidity after 3d6 rounds.

If you wear a lump of acid neutralizer in a necklace or carry it otherwise exposed on your body, the lump prevents continuing damage from acid attacks for 1 minute after initial exposure. It has no effect against the initial damage dealt by an acid attack.

Construction: DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check, 17 gp.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 50 gp.

Bottled Air

This strong vapor clears away fog, mist, and clouds in seconds, allowing you to see more clearly.

Description: Bottled air is stored as blue-tinted liquid in glass vials. It gives off a strong acrid smell. When a vial is opened, the liquid turns to mist and expands outward, creating a small area of fresh, clean air.

Activation: To activate bottled air, the vial in which it is stored must be opened (a standard action). Bottled air can also be thrown as a splash weapon; the vial breaks on contact and releases the mist into the air.

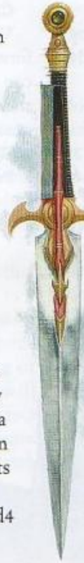
Effect: Bottled air clears fog, smoke, and other gases from the square it occupies. If you are carrying a vial when it is opened, you can apply the effect to a single square adjacent to you. That square, and only that square, will be cleared. A creature that stands in a clear square still gains the benefit of concealment from obscured squares around it, but it loses those benefits against foes adjacent to the clear space.

Once released from its vial, bottled air lasts for 2d4 rounds before it sputters out.

Construction: DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check, 17 gp.

Weight: —.

Price: 50 gp.



Wand chamber

Firmament Stone

This violet crystal gem has been treated with an alchemical substance that reacts to the position of either the sun or the moon. Even while indoors or below ground, you know the time of day (or night).

Description: Firmament stones are violet iolite gems that have a clear crystalline appearance. While the heavenly body to which the stone is attuned is in the sky, a small yellow light glows within the stone, crossing from one side (when the body first appears in the sky) to the other (when the body sets). By examining the position of the glow, you can approximate the time of day or night.

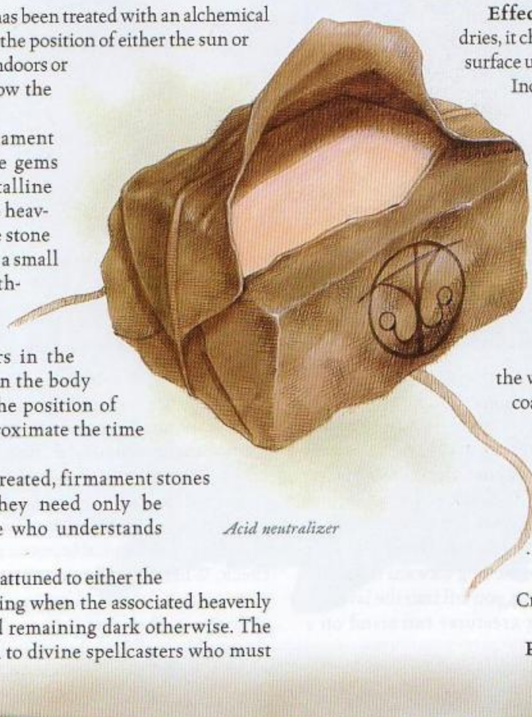
Activation: Once created, firmament stones are always active. They need only be observed by someone who understands their significance.

Effect: Each stone is attuned to either the sun or the moon, glowing when the associated heavenly body is in the sky, and remaining dark otherwise. The stones are most useful to divine spellcasters who must prepare spells at a specific time of day. Firmament stones attuned to the moon also show the phase of the moon by altering the shape of the glow that travels through the stone each night.

Construction: DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check, 20 gp, one 50-gp iolite gemstone.

Weight: 1/2 lb.

Price: 110 gp.



Acid neutralizer

Ghostwall Shellac

It can be difficult to ward off creatures that have the ability to float through dungeon walls. A quick coat of ghostwall shellac will keep pesky spirits from drifting in and out of your campsite all night.

Description: Concentrated ghostwall shellac is a thick green sludge that is always warm to the touch. It is usually stored in metal vials and mixed with water when needed. Prepared shellac is lime green and runny, and it smells like dead flesh.

Activation: Ghostwall shellac must be mixed with 1 gallon of water to become active. The mixture is then spread over any nonliving surface, most commonly the walls of a room. Coating a 10-foot square with prepared shellac takes 1 minute, and 1 gallon of the green liquid covers 10 such squares. Whether it is applied to a surface or left in a container, the shellac dries and hardens 1 hour after being mixed with water.

Effect: When ghostwall shellac dries, it changes the composition of the surface upon which it has been spread. Incorporeal creatures can no longer pass through a coated wall any more than normal creatures can. The shellac also causes the wall to simultaneously exist on the Ethereal Plane for a limited time, so creatures on that plane cannot see through or pass through the space it occupies. When applying ghostwall shellac to the walls of a room, remember to coat the floor and ceiling as well, lest unwanted spirits merely enter through those surfaces instead.

Ghostwall shellac lasts for 4d6 hours once applied.

Construction: DC 30 Craft (alchemy) check, 50 gp.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 150 gp.

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Lava Stones

Lava stones cool small areas of molten rock, allowing you to create a series of temporary steps across a body of magma.

Description: A lava stone is a tiny pebble that is cool to the touch. When dropped in lava, the pebble sinks quickly, cooling the lava as it descends. The result is a 2-foot-diameter column of hardened black stone that crests just above the surface of the lava.

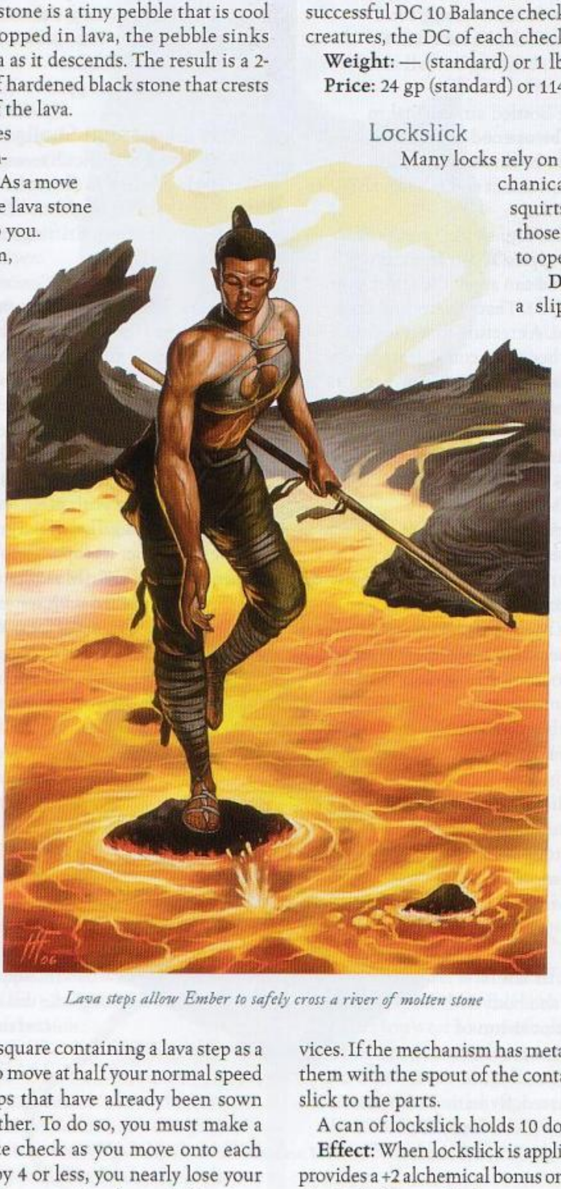
Activation: Lava stones activate only when completely immersed in lava. As a move action, you can drop one lava stone into a square adjacent to you. The hardened platform, commonly referred to as a lava step, forms immediately, and you can step onto it with a second move action during the same turn.

You can also create a lava step at a distance by throwing the stone as an attack action. Use the rules for throwing splash weapons (*PH* 158).

Once formed, a lava step lasts for 3d8 minutes before the surrounding heat turns it back into molten rock. One round before the step melts, it glows orange and deals 1d6 points of fire damage to anyone standing on it. In the following round, the step melts, dumping anyone still standing on it into fiery lava.

Effect: You can safely move into an adjacent square containing a lava step as a move action. You can also move at half your normal speed across a path of lava steps that have already been sown within 5 feet of one another. To do so, you must make a successful DC 10 Balance check as you move onto each step. If you fail a check by 4 or less, you nearly lose your balance and cannot continue moving forward this turn. If you fail a check by 5 or more, you fall into the lava.

Only Medium or smaller creatures can stand on a lava step.



Lava steps allow Ember to safely cross a river of molten stone

Illus. by W. Maby

Construction: DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check, 16 gp.

Variants: A greater lava stone is the size of a potato and forms a step that has a diameter of 6 feet. Large creatures can walk across a trail of greater lava steps with a series of successful DC 10 Balance checks. For Medium or smaller creatures, the DC of each check drops to 5.

Weight: — (standard) or 1 lb. (greater).

Price: 24 gp (standard) or 114 gp (greater).

Lockslick

Many locks rely on friction to keep their mechanical parts in place. A few squirts of lockslick will loosen those parts, making them easier to open with thieves' tools.

Description: Lockslick is a slippery brown substance that resembles ordinary grease in appearance and texture. It is stored in a small tin can with a long, tapered spout. Unlike grease, however, it does not easily rub off a surface to which it is applied, making it ideal for oiling locks without getting your hands or equipment messy. Further, lockslick is not flammable, which accounts for its popularity among adventuring thieves who might face flame-spewing monsters or traps.

Activation: To apply lockslick to a lock, insert the spout of the can into the keyhole or other crevice, and squirt (a standard action). Lockslick can also help you disarm mechanical traps or devices. If the mechanism has metal parts and you can touch them with the spout of the container, you can apply lockslick to the parts.

A can of lockslick holds 10 doses.

Effect: When lockslick is applied to a lock, the substance provides a +2 alchemical bonus on an associated Open Lock check. When applied to a trap or mechanism, lockslick provides a +2 alchemical bonus on a Disable Device check to disarm it. The effect lasts on the lock or trap until it is thoroughly scrubbed clean (a full-round action).

Construction: DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check, 60 gp.
Weight: 1/2 lb.
Price: 180 gp.

Trollbane

Discovered by gnome alchemists as a safe alternative to flaming weapons, trollbane interferes with the natural ability of certain creatures to regenerate their flesh. Dubbed trollbane because it is frequently used against those particular monsters, this poison is effective against any creature that rapidly heals its wounds.

Description: Trollbane is a sticky blue substance that resembles tar. It is usually stored in metal jars.

Activation: Trollbane functions as injury poison (*DMG* 296) and can be applied directly to weapons prior to combat. A successful hit with a slashing or piercing weapon that has been coated in trollbane will expose the target to the poison. Trollbane has no effect unless used in conjunction with a forceful blow from a weapon, so adventurers can carry it with little risk of exposure.

Effect: Any creature struck by a weapon that has been coated in trollbane loses the benefit of its regeneration ability (if any) against that attack. A dose of trollbane applies only to the next successful attack with the coated weapon. Additional attacks do not interfere with the target's regeneration ability (unless more trollbane is applied to the weapon).

Construction: DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check, 30 gp.
Weight: —.
Price: 90 gp.

MAGIC ITEMS

A dungeon is a place of magic, and adventurers who intend to survive its challenges should bring magic of their own. Equipping yourself with the most effective magic items for a dungeon crawl will ensure that you maximize your limited resources.

TRIED AND TRUE ESSENTIALS

What magic items are best suited for a dungeon crawl? Anything that adds to your combat abilities is certainly welcome, but take care to select a few items that increase your sensory abilities and your movement capabilities. Often, it is not necessary for every member of the party to buy these items, because they can be traded back and forth. Instead, figure out which items your group will need, and

Useful magic items enhance characters' existing strengths in a dungeon

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pool your gold to buy one of each. Consider these suggestions from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, arranged in order of price:

Dust of Dryness (850 gp): This item is a good answer to the popular room-filling-with-water trap. In most cases, *dust of dryness* will not stop the water from rising to the ceiling, but soaking up 100 gallons will buy you extra time to find another way out. As a bonus, the resultant pebble can later be thrown into a room of monsters to flood them out.

Bag of Tricks (gray, 900 gp): With this item, you enjoy the benefit of having a small animal companion that can scout dungeon corridors without worrying about the drawbacks if it is slain. Few monsters will react to the presence of a rat or a bat; such creatures probably infest the dungeon already. A more callous PC might also use an animal from a *bag of tricks* to search for traps the old-fashioned way—namely, sending the critter down a hallway and seeing if it gets zapped.

Goggles of Minute Seeing (1,250 gp): This magic item enhances one of the most frequently used skills in any dungeon. Buy the goggles as a gift for the rogue in your group, and you will almost assuredly end up in fewer traps during your next expedition.

Sovereign Glue (2,400 gp per ounce): Just a dab will seal a door for good, confining monsters to their chambers and preventing trapdoors from opening.

Bag of Holding (2,500 gp or more): There is nothing more frustrating than trouncing a monster and not having enough carrying capacity to take its loot. A *bag of holding* can solve that problem, but if you bring this item into the dungeon empty, you are wasting half its potential. Instead, fill it with expendable items that you will use on the trip down through the dungeon, such as food, waterskins, potions, alchemical items, and so on. Then, after you defeat the dungeon's overlord in a final, epic confrontation, the mostly empty bag will be ready to hold his treasure. (In a pinch, a *bag of holding* is also a good way to transport a friend's armored corpse back to town to be resurrected—especially if he happens to be the party cleric.)

Nolzur's Marvelous Pigments (4,000 gp): With these pigments, the possibilities are endless. Create any piece of equipment needed without having to hike back to the surface. Reshape the dungeon environment to your advantage by painting doors, pits, stairs, ladders, ropes, bridges, traps, windows, barriers, pulleys, or whatever you can imagine. Better yet, conserve the pigments by thinking small. Paint a peephole to spy on monsters in the next room, or a crack down the middle of a door to facilitate battering. Alchemical items are fair game, too, so doodle yourself a tanglefoot bag when you need it. And when you absolutely must incinerate a monster, paint a giant pit of lava—but make sure to use it soon, because without a natural source of geothermic heat, it will cool down in about an hour.

Wand of Knock (4,500 gp): A skilled rogue is more valuable than a limited-use magic item, but it never hurts to have an option for those really tough locks. A *chime of opening* might be cheaper at only 3,000 gp, but it has a mere 10 uses compared to the wand's 50 charges. Only a wizard or a sorcerer can use the wand reliably, but you probably already have one of those in your party. If you are a rogue, keep a *wand of knock* up your sleeve at all times, and you will be one successful Use Magic Device check away from a reputation as a lockpicking miracle worker.

Boots of Levitation (7,500 gp): The benefits of being able to move vertically in a dungeon are obvious. But *boots of levitation* have a rare advantage—they can be used at will. However, they are not much use in combat, so try wearing some other magic footwear (such as *boots of striding and springing*) most of the time, and swap them for *boots of levitation* when presented with an obstacle. Because the boots have unlimited usage, you can take them off when you reach the top (or the bottom) of the obstacle and throw them back to your allies so that they can catch up with you, one at a time.

Gauntlet of Rust (11,500 gp): This gauntlet has many uses in a dungeon. It can rust a locked door off its hinges, destroy the clasps on a treasure chest, ruin any trap that has metal parts, break through a portcullis, sever a chain, or cause prison bars to crumble. You can use it only once a day, but the effect lasts for 7 rounds, so before you slip it on, be sure you have more than one potential use within walking distance. If you expect to encounter golems, let the party's wizard wear the *gauntlet of rust*. Otherwise, the golem's immunity to magic might keep her on the sidelines.

Lyre of Building (13,000 gp): Creativity is key with this magic item, so remember that almost any feature of the dungeon that was constructed can be changed. Use a *lyre of building* to reroute tunnels, fill pits, erect barricades, or construct specialized rooms that play to your party's strengths so that you can lure unsuspecting monsters to their demise.

Ioun Stone (iridescent spindle, 18,000 gp): The ability to survive without air can protect you from many traps. To make this or any other *ioun stone* more useful, cast *continual flame* (PH 213) on it to create a hands-free light source.

Carpet of Flying (20,000 gp or more): Unlimited usage makes a *carpet of flying* the best flight-granting magic item hands down, and its price reflects that. If you cannot afford the largest size of carpet (which has room for a party of four and a luxurious 800-pound carrying capacity), buy the smaller 5-foot-square model instead. You can direct it verbally to ferry your allies one by one over any dungeon obstacle.

Ring of X-Ray Vision (25,000 gp): Use this ring to peer through every door before you open it or to see the internal workings of a trap before you attempt to disarm it. In addition, secret doors are practically impossible to miss. But unless you have immunity to Constitution damage—such as if you are undead or a construct—take care not to exceed the ring's 10-minute time limit. Instead, create a homunculus that can wear the ring, and you will have the perfect scout: a Tiny flying servant with unlimited X-ray vision that can relate all it sees back to you telepathically.

Lantern of Revealing (30,000 gp): A constant *invisibility purge* (*PH* 245) within 25 feet is well worth the energy spent keeping this lantern filled with oil. Make sure it remains lit and that all party members stay within its radius as often as possible, especially when resting in a hostile dungeon.

Ring Gates (40,000 gp): Dungeoneers should stick together as much as possible, but sometimes, a party simply must split into two groups that head in different directions. For example, a puzzle might require the simultaneous operation of two mechanisms that are located far apart. This pair of iron rings makes it easy to divide a party. Objects that are pushed only partially through the gates do not count toward the rings' daily weight limit, so you can pop your head through for a quick conference with the other team as needed. Notes, maps, scrolls, and other light items can be sent through without worry. If one team is attacked, a spellcaster in the other group can send a spell through the *ring gates* to help her companions. And if you need to fiddle with a mechanism that is located in a tight spot, let the wizard's familiar carry one ring into the confined area, and stick your face and hands through the other ring.

Rod of Alertness (85,000 gp): A *rod of alertness* is probably one of the best magic items for protecting PCs while they rest or sleep, and it practically eliminates the need to keep watch. But do not overlook its ability to animate up to eleven Small objects. Such items might not be terribly effective in combat, but they make great trap-springers.

NEW ARMOR AND WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITIES

The new weapon and armor special abilities below are particularly useful in dungeons, allowing PCs to better defend themselves in common situations.

Durable Armor

To protect their valuable magic armor, many fighters add this special ability to guard against familiar dungeon hazards.

Description: Durable armor is coated with special substances that repel caustic attacks. The surface of the armor is slick to the touch, indicating the special magical and alchemical treatments applied during its manufacture.

Prerequisite: Only metal armors can have this special ability.

Activation: The effects of durable armor automatically come into effect when needed. No action on the wearer's part is required.

Effect: Durable armor has immunity to special attacks that would cause it to dissolve or rust, including the effects of *rusting grasp* (*PH* 273) and the touch of black puddings, gray oozes, and rust monsters. Durable armor takes no damage from green slime or from acid, though it does not extend this protection to the wearer.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from energy*.

Price: 500 gp.

Restful Armor

Armor with the restful special ability allows a warrior to sleep peacefully, knowing that he will be prepared if trouble finds him during the night.

Description: Armor of any type can be constructed to have this special ability, though medium and heavy armors are the most common choices. Restful armor always seems designed for maximum comfort, with additional padding and softened fastenings. When you sleep in restful armor, a dimly glowing circle of blue runes encircles your head, emitting peaceful thoughts.

Activation: The restful ability activities when you fall asleep wearing the armor. No other action on your part is required.

Effect: Sleeping in restful armor does not cause you to become fatigued, even if the armor is medium or heavy. Further, you can make Listen checks with a penalty of only –5 while sleeping in the armor. If you make a successful Listen check while sleeping, you can choose to wake up or to remain asleep, depending on the noise you hear.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *sleep*, *lullaby*.

Price: 500 gp.

Swarmguard Armor

Any armor with this special ability protects its wearer from the hundreds of bites or stings that result from being overrun by a swarm of creatures.

Description: Swarmguard armor is precisely crafted with a bare minimum of gaps between pieces. Delicate script is engraved around each seam that is absolutely necessary, warding it against intrusion by the tiniest of vermin. When exposed to a swarm attack, the script glows bright red, blocking creatures that try to penetrate the armor's defenses.

Activation: The swarmguard ability activates automatically when a creature of the swarm subtype enters your space. No action on your part is required.

Effect: You gain damage reduction 5/— to the swarm attack ability of any creature of the swarm subtype. You gain a bonus on Fortitude saving throws and on Concentration checks to resist a swarm's distraction ability (*MM* 316). This bonus is equal to the armor bonus of the armor you are wearing.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *repel vermin*.

Price: +1 bonus.

Swarmstrike Weapon

Standard weapons are not terribly effective at dealing with insect swarms, but a weapon that has the swarmstrike special ability is much more capable of killing the pests.

Description: A swarmstrike weapon is slightly flexible so that you can swing it quickly enough to swat the insects that make up most swarms. Arrows or bolts that have this special ability are crafted with a wide, flat head that resembles a shovel. The ammunition splatters bugs on its leading edge as it passes through the swarm's space.

Activation: The swarmstrike ability activates automatically when you attack a creature of the swarm subtype. No other action on your part is required.

Effect: When used to attack creatures of the swarm subtype, the weapon's enhancement bonus increases by 2. Further, a swarmstrike weapon deals lethal damage against a creature of the swarm subtype, regardless of the size of the component creatures or the type of damage dealt by the weapon.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate abjuration; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *repel vermin*.

Price: +1 bonus.

NEW WONDROUS ITEMS

Dungeons offer endless challenges to adventurers, so it should not be a surprise that adventurers have invented an endless supply of wondrous magic items in response. An explorer never knows when a strange or obscure item might save his life.

Blankets of Security

In case of nocturnal ambush, a set of *blankets of security* allows you to awaken five people with a single uttered phrase.

Description: *Blankets of security* are five matching wool blankets, each embroidered with sigils in orange thread along the edges. When activated, the sigils glow brightly and vibrate, emitting a low subsonic hum.

Activation: You fall asleep under a *blanket of security* as you would under any normal blanket. Activating the blanket's magic requires a command word, which can be spoken as a free action. The same command word or phrase activates all blankets in a set, allowing whoever is on night watch to wake the rest of the party quickly. Typical command words might be "Rise and shine," "Danger lurks," or the simple but effective "Wake up!"

Effect: When a creature within 100 feet speaks the command word, a *blanket of security* automatically wakes any creature sleeping under it, even if the dozing creature is under a magical *sleep* effect.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration; CL 3rd.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *alarm*, 1,100 gp, 88 XP, 2 days.

Variants: Sets of more than five blankets have been crafted for larger adventuring parties.

Weight: 15 lb. (set of 5) + 3 lb. per each additional blanket.

Price: 2,200 gp (set of 5) + 440 gp per each additional blanket.

Boots of Sidestepping

When worn, these boots increase your ability to dodge certain incoming attacks, such as the effect of an activated trap.

Description: *Boots of sidestepping* are comfortable boots of soft leather that have good traction. They are fashioned from the tanned hide of displacer beasts and tooled with mystic symbols. When the boots activate, you move in a blur of speed as you dodge an incoming attack.

Activation: *Boots of sidestepping* activate automatically when you are exposed to an attack that allows a Reflex save. No action on your part is necessary.

Effect: While wearing *boots of sidestepping*, you can move 5 feet as an immediate action whenever you are allowed to make a Reflex save against a spell, spell-like ability, or supernatural effect. You move before making the Reflex save. If, after moving, you stand outside the attack's area, you avoid it completely and no longer need to attempt the save. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong transmutation; CL 12th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *haste*, 1,500 gp, 60 XP, 2 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 3,000 gp.

Clasp of Safeguarding

This tiny, decorative clasp protects your valuable magic items by drawing a harmful effect to itself instead.

Description: A *clasp of safeguarding* looks like a delicate gold pin that can be affixed to clothing or armor. The pin is sculpted to resemble a tortoise, with two minuscule green gemstones for eyes. When the clasp is activated, the tortoise's head and feet animate and draw inside its shell. The clasp glows brilliant green and briefly surrounds you with a translucent ward of energy. After the light fades, the clasp does not return to its former appearance and is no longer magical.

Activation: To be effective, a *clasp of safeguarding* must be clipped on one of your exposed magic items. The clasp is automatically activated whenever you roll a natural 1 on a saving throw against a spell, trap, or other effect that could affect any of your items. For example, the clasp would activate in the case of a *fireball* spell or a dragon's lightning breath, but not in the case of a *charm person* spell, which cannot affect objects.

Effect: None of your exposed items (magical or otherwise) is harmed by the effect for which you rolled a natural 1 on your save. A *clasp of safeguarding* works only once. After it protects your equipment from harm, it loses its magic and becomes a mundane piece of jewelry.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *protection from energy*, 750 gp, 60 XP, 2 days.

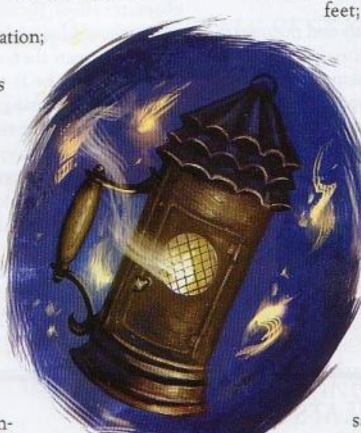
Weight: 1/3 lb.

Price: 1,500 gp.

Dancing Lantern

This bullseye lantern levitates on command, allowing you to direct it verbally while keeping your hands free.

Description: A *dancing lantern* resembles a standard bullseye lantern, except that it is crafted of mithral and its interior mirrors are made of polished silver rather than glass. When activated, the lantern floats in the air, darting back and forth as commanded by its owner. As it flies, it leaves a trail of golden sparks that quickly fade.



Dancing lantern

Activation: A *dancing lantern* is operated by two command words. The first ("illuminion") causes the lantern to light, and repeating the word extinguishes the glow. The second command word ("aviallow") causes the lamp to float, and repeating the word causes it to land gently. While it floats, a *dancing lamp* can be directed verbally as a free action as long as it is within 1,000 feet of its owner.

Effect: A *dancing lantern* provides magical light as a standard bullseye lantern, though it consumes no oil. However, it is more prized for its ability to remain aloft. When in the air, the lantern hovers within your reach, allowing you to benefit from its illumination while keeping your hands free.

If desired, you can verbally direct a *dancing lantern* to move away from you. On any of your turns, it can fly up to 90 feet per round with perfect maneuverability and can rotate to shine its cone of light in any direction. A *dancing lantern* will not stray farther than 1,000 feet from you. If you move farther away, it will attempt to move to within 1,000 feet on its next turn.

A lantern can be attacked while it is flying. It is Tiny and has AC 12, 30 hit points, and hardness 10.

Variant: Some *dancing lanterns* have been crafted as intelligent items. An intelligent *dancing lantern* can fly on its own and decide where to shine its light. It can also travel more than 1,000 feet from its owner. Like any intelligent magic item, it does not automatically obey directions, though its owner can deactivate its ability to fly with a command word, if desired.

A typical intelligent *dancing lantern* has Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14, and Ego 7; has vision and hearing to 120 feet; can speak Common and two other languages; and can communicate telepathically with its owner if within 1,000 feet. It has 10 ranks in Search and can use *faerie fire* (*PH* 229) three times per day as a spell-like ability. It can be of any alignment, though most intelligent *dancing lanterns* are chaotic.

Intelligent *dancing lanterns* are insatiable explorers, curious to see what lurks around the next turn of the dungeon corridor. If forced to stop moving, they occasionally make Search checks on their surroundings to stave off boredom. Many adventurers have been saved from death traps because their *dancing lantern* was randomly searching the area.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint evocation and transmutation, CL 5th (standard lantern); or strong transmutation and evocation, CL 15th (intelligent lantern).

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *continual flame*, *levitate*, 1,000 gp, 40 XP, 1 day.

Weight: 3 lb.

Price: 2,000 gp (standard) or 10,300 gp (intelligent).

Grasping Hook

This animated grappling hook seeks out the best place to secure a rope.

Description: When dormant, a *grasping hook* appears to be a mithral grappling hook delicately sculpted to resemble the claw of a dragon, with three main claws jutting out and a fourth opposable claw curled in at the palm. When the command word is spoken, the hook springs to life. All four claws begin moving, and it can move by using the claws as tiny legs.

Activation: A single command word activates a *grasping hook*. Speaking the word once causes the hook to animate and immediately seek the nearest secure object that it can grasp. Speaking the word a second time causes

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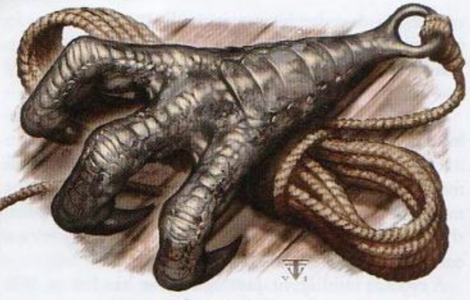


Grasping hook

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

the hook to release its grasp immediately and resume its dormant position.

Effect: When a grasping hook is tied to silk rope, you can throw it as a standard mithral grappling hook (see page 32). However, you can also speak the command word (a free action) as you throw the hook to cause it to animate. The hook then tries to grab onto the nearest secure object, granting a +6 competence bonus on your Use Rope check to seat it properly. A *grasping hook* has a Strength of 25 and can hold 1,600 pounds when grasping a secure object or terrain feature. You can cause a hook to release its grasp by speaking the command word again.

Aura/Caster Level: Weak transmutation; CL 3rd.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength*, 250 gp, 4 XP, 1 day.

Weight: 2 lb.

Price: 500 gp.

ADVENTURING KITS

It can be difficult to cover all the bases when packing for a dungeon expedition. A player in a hurry can choose a premade kit of magical and mundane equipment to add to his character's pack. Just find the kit you want below and write the total cost and weight on your character sheet. (Some kits contain expendable items, so you should list each of these items separately on your sheet.) You can then send your PC into the dungeon, confident that he is well equipped for the challenge. Premade adventuring kits do not contain everything a PC might need, but each kit has a good variety of tools to get the job done.

Before adding a premade kit to your character sheet, check with your DM to make sure that your PC can purchase magic items at his current location.

CLERIC-IN-A-BOX KIT

If your party lacks a cleric, or if your cleric focuses on offensive rather than defensive spells, the cleric-

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND FEATS

The following skills are universally valuable for dungeon exploration. Even some that are not class skills for certain characters are often worth the investment of a few ranks.

Spot and Listen: These skills are especially important in a dungeon, where it's harder to determine what's ahead of you.

Climb and Use Rope: Dungeons have a nasty tendency to be full of deep pits and steep slopes. Failing a check to climb or secure a rope can mean death or serious injury, not to mention hindering the party's progress, and you'll need those hit points for combat.

Disable Device: Traps are so common in dungeons that every party needs a character with a high Disable Device modifier, typically a rogue.

Search: The most interesting parts of a dungeon are usually hidden. Secret doors, concealed switches, and faint glyphs abound—not to mention nasty traps—and finding a cache of treasure is easier with a high Search modifier.

Knowledge (dungeoneering): No skill informs your strategic choices as well as Knowledge (dungeoneering). Use it to navigate underground environments and get the drop on subterranean creatures.

Hide and Move Silently: Bypassing danger and setting up ambushes is often wiser than attacking head-on, especially when the party is already banged up and far from civilization.

Decipher Script, Knowledge (arcana), and Knowledge (history): Ancient dungeons contain lost secrets, and these skills can help determine why a dungeon exists and who made it, as well as enabling you to solve puzzles and bypass danger.

Open Lock: Locked doors are common, and breaking those doors down ruins any chance of surprise. Open Lock can keep your party covert while still moving forward. It also helps get the loot out of locked chests with less fuss and muss.

Survival: Finding food, setting up camp, and finding the trail of a monster are just as important in a dungeon as in the aboveground wilderness. Don't forget that with 5 or more ranks in Survival, you can discern north—a useful ability in a maze.

Jump: Chasms, rubble, and another sorts of obstacles are typical of dungeons, and you might not have time to climb over or work your way through (especially if enemies are in pursuit). A high Jump modifier can save you when time is short.

FEATS

Some feats that are useful most of the time can be even more so in a dungeon.

Alertness: This feat improves those critical Spot and Listen checks to help you avoid being surprised.

Improved Initiative: Ambushes are frequent in dungeons, and Improved Initiative lets you recover quickly even if you are caught by surprise.

Lightning Reflexes: Traps and environmental hazards (not to mention monsters) make Reflex saves crucial in a dungeon.

Stealthy: Many characters are ill suited to stealthy movement, especially those wearing heavy armor, but this feat can pick up the slack. The quieter everyone moves, the more advantageous for the whole party.

in-a-box kit is a fine substitute in an emergency. With potions on hand to heal most ailments, you can march into a dungeon with the peace of mind that relief is never far away.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Weight
Antitoxin	4	200 gp	—
Healer's kit	1	50 gp	1/2 lb.
Holy water	4	100 gp	4 lb.
Keoghtom's ointment	1	4,000 gp	1/2 lb
Potions			
cure moderate wounds	2	600 gp	— lb.
lesser restoration	2	600 gp	— lb.
remove blindness/deafness	1	750 gp	— lb.
remove curse	1	750 gp	— lb.
remove paralysis	1	300 gp	— lb.
Total		**7,350 gp**	**5 lb.**

DOORBUSTER KIT

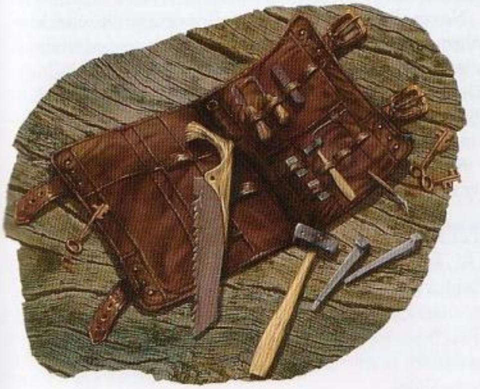
With this kit in your backpack, no door will block your way. If you cannot pick the lock, melt it. If you cannot melt it, pry it open. If you cannot pry it open, saw it off. With all these options, you will yearn to face tougher locks—just for the change of pace.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Weight
Acid (flask)	4	40 gp	4 lb.
Crowbar	1	2 gp	5 lb.
Hacksaw, superior	1	20 gp	1 lb.
Lockslick	2	360 gp	1 lb.
Thieves' tools, masterwork	1	100 gp	2 lb.
Wand of knock	1	4,500 gp	—
Total		**5,022 gp**	**13 lb.**

MOBILITY KIT

You should have no problem leading the party anywhere with this suite of climbing and exploring aids. The potions cover special situations, while the climber's kit lets you scale a wall first before dropping a line back down for your companions. And the *bag of holding*? Let's just say there is no such thing as having too much rope.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Weight
Bag of holding, type I	1	2,500 gp	15 lb.
Climber's kit	1	80 gp	5 lb.
Grappling hook, mithral	1	1,000 gp	2 lb.
Lava stone	10	240 gp	—
Potions			
jump	4	200 gp	—
levitate	2	600 gp	—
spider climb	2	600 gp	—
water breathing	1	750 gp	—
water walk	1	750 gp	—
Quaal's feather token, swan boat	1	450 gp	—
Rope, silk (100 ft.)	4	80 gp	10 lb.
Total		**7,250 gp**	**32 lb.**



Thieves' tools

SAFE REST KIT

When your party needs to rest, protect everyone with this kit of cautionary equipment. Barricade yourself in a room by spiking the doors shut. If ghosts or ethereal filchers are a concern, paint the walls, ceiling, and floor with ghostwall shellac to keep out things that go bump in the night.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Weight
Bedroll	6	20 gp	1 lb.
Ghostwall shellac	6	900 gp	6 lb.
Hammer	1	5 sp	2 lb.
Iron spike	5	5 sp	5 lb.
Stone of alarm	1	2,700 gp	2 lb.
Waterskin	1	1 gp	4 lb.
Total		**3,622 gp**	**20 lb.**

TRAPSPRINGER KIT

With a variety of tools for finding and neutralizing common traps, you are well prepared to face any mechanical hazard. Use the dagger to cut through trap parts with ease (especially when dealing with encounter traps; see page 120). Feel ahead for pressure plates with the collapsible pole, and send the animals from the *bag of tricks* ahead to test for traps.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Weight
Acid (flask)	3	30 gp	3 lb.
Acid neutralizer	3	150 gp	3 lb.
Antitoxin	5	250 gp	—
Bag of tricks, gray	1	900 gp	—
Collapsible pole	1	20 gp	8 lb.
Dagger, adamantine	1	3,002 gp	1 lb.
Goggles of minute seeing	1	1,250 gp	—
Hacksaw, adamantine	1	600 gp	1 lb.
Lockslick	2	360 gp	1 lb.
Rubber ball	10	30 gp	—
Thieves' tools, masterwork	1	100 gp	2 lb.
Total		**6,692 gp**	**19 lb.**

Illus. by B. Hagan

Illus. by R. Horsley

This chapter presents a variety of dungeon-themed material that adds to the subterranean adventuring experience, both for player characters and the opponents they face.

NEW FEATS

Feat selection is perhaps the biggest factor that differentiates two characters of the same class. The following feats supplement those in the *Player's Handbook* and other sources. Each feat offers valuable talents to dungeoneering PCs.

Tactical Feats: Feats that have the tactical descriptor allow characters to perform impressive or surprising maneuvers, provided that they set up those maneuvers by taking the proper actions to prepare them. Tactical feats were originally presented in *Complete Warrior.*

Weapon Style Feats: The feats in this category (also introduced in *Complete Warrior*) are evocative of distinctive fighting styles that use existing weapons in original ways, or styles that arise from the use of certain weapons or other objects in combination.

COMBAT TINKERING

You can disarm traps or pick locks quickly and efficiently, even under the pressure of combat.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on Concentration checks to avoid being distracted in combat while making Disable Device or Open Lock checks. You also gain a +4 bonus when attempting to quicken a Disable Device or Open Lock check (see the Quickened Skill Checks sidebar).

Normal: You must make a Concentration check whenever you are damaged or otherwise distracted while attempting to use the Disable Device or Open Lock skills. The DC to open a lock or disable a device is increased by 20 if you attempt to complete the task in a shorter amount of time.

Special: This feat is particularly useful against encounter traps (see page 120).

GNOME TUNNEL ACROBATICS [TACTICAL]

Goblin raiding parties whisper of the crazed but effective tactics that gnome tunnel guards use to defend their homes. The gnomes excel at using acrobatics to penetrate enemy ranks or launch devastating attacks from above.

Table 3–1: New Feats

General Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Combat Tinkering	—	+4 bonus on Concentration when using Disable Device or Open Lock; +4 bonus when quickening Disable Device or Open Lock
Quick Reconnoiter	Listen 5 ranks, Spot 5 ranks	Make Spot and Listen checks as free actions; +2 bonus on initiative checks
Trap Engineer	Knowledge (architecture and engineering) 1 rank, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks	Bonuses when dealing with traps after the first
Trap Sensitivity	Elf or trapfinding class feature, trap sense +2	Sense mechanical traps as you sense secret doors
Tunnel Fighting	Base attack bonus +1	No penalty on attacks or to AC while squeezing
Tactical Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Gnome Tunnel Acrobatics	Gnome; or base attack bonus +4, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 2 ranks, Tumble 9 ranks	Gain benefits in combat (see feat description)
Undermountain Tactics	Dwarf or gnome; or base attack bonus +6, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 2 ranks	Gain benefits in combat (see feat description)
Weapon Style Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Hammer and Piton	Str 15, Climb 3 ranks	Drive pitons into Large foe and climb him
Weapon and Torch	—	Burn and dazzle foes with lit torch

Prerequisites: Gnome; or base attack bonus +4, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 2 ranks, and Tumble 9 ranks.

Benefit: The Gnome Tunnel Acrobatics feat enables the use of certain tactical maneuvers, described below.

Combat Puppeteer: You slip between your foes in a blur of movement, confusing them and causing them to strike at each other by mistake. If you use the Tumble skill to avoid an opponent's attack of opportunity, you can use this maneuver on the following round. You must make a double move and attempt a Tumble check at a –5 penalty to avoid a foe's attack of opportunity. If your check succeeds, your foe makes an attack of opportunity but targets a creature of your choice within its reach rather than you. You can use this maneuver against one creature per round.

Tunnel Scrambler: Using a series of deft tumbles and somersaults, you crowd your opponent and force him to move. If you make a successful melee attack against an opponent who has walls adjacent to at least two sides of his space, you can make a special Tumble check on your next turn. This check requires a full-round action. As part of this action, make a Tumble check to move through the target's space. On a successful check, you stop in his space (rather than move past him) and attack as part of your full-round action. If the check fails, you provoke an attack of opportunity, and the rest of your full-round action is wasted.

If your melee attack hits, you move your foe 5 feet in a direction of your choice. You now occupy the space that he occupied (or one of the spaces of your choice). If your melee attack misses, you return to the space you occupied when you started this maneuver.

Wall Leaper: If you drop from a wall while climbing and land adjacent to a creature, you can make one attack as a standard action. This attack counts as a charge, and you gain a bonus on your damage roll equal to the number of points of falling damage that you take.

Special: A fighter can select Gnome Tunnel Acrobatics as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH* 38).

HAMMER AND PITON [STYLE]

You can drive pitons into your foes, giving you a useful perch from which to strike.

Prerequisites: Strength 15, Climb 3 ranks.

Benefit: While wielding a one-handed bludgeoning melee weapon in your primary hand and a climbing piton or spike in the other, you can make a touch attack with the piton as a standard action. This attack deals 1d4 points of damage + your Strength modifier. The target must be size Large or bigger.

If the target is at least one size category larger than you, you can make a special Climb check (DC equal to

QUICKENED SKILL CHECKS

When making a Disable Device check, you can attempt to reduce the time required to a full-round action by adding 20 to the DC. For example, a trap that normally requires a successful DC 20 check and takes 2d4 rounds to disarm could be disabled in 1 round with a successful DC 40 check.

When making an Open Lock check, you can attempt to reduce the time required to a move action by adding 20 to the DC. For example, a lock that normally requires a successful DC 25 check and takes a full-round action to open could be opened in a move action with a successful DC 45 check.

the target's Armor Class) to enter his space as a move action. You must make the check on the same turn in which you struck your foe with the piton. If the check succeeds, you enter and remain in the target's space without provoking an attack of opportunity from the target. You lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, but if your foe moves, you remain in his space as he moves. If any attack against you deals 10 or more points of damage, you must make a Climb check (DC equal to the number of points of damage) to remain in place. If the check fails, you must leave your foe's space and enter the nearest clear space.

Special: A fighter can select Hammer and Piton as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH* 38).

QUICK RECONNOITER

You are skilled at scanning an area or object quickly and thoroughly.

Prerequisite: Listen 5 ranks, Spot 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can make one Spot check and one Listen check each round as a free action. You also gain a +2 bonus on initiative checks.

Normal: Using Spot or Listen in a reactive fashion is a free action, but actively trying to make a Spot check or a Listen check requires a move action.

TRAP ENGINEER

You have spent a great deal of time studying trap construction and recognize the work of famous builders, which gives you an edge against their devices.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (architecture and engineering) 1 rank, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks.

Benefit: You know the styles of famous dungeon architects or recognize their influences. After finding or setting off a trap in a dungeon, you gain a +2 bonus on future Search checks and Disable Device checks to find or disarm traps in that same dungeon. You also gain a +4 bonus on Reflex saves to avoid traps in that dungeon, and a +4 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks made by traps in that dungeon.

TRAP SENSITIVITY

Your senses are so attuned that you can detect mechanical traps that are close by.

Prerequisites: Elf or trapfinding class feature, trap sense +2.

Benefit: When you pass within 5 feet of a mechanical trap, you are entitled to make a Search check to notice the trap as if you were looking for it. You cannot sense magic traps or spell traps with this feat.

Normal: Without this feat, you must actively search for a trap to find it before it activates.

TUNNEL FIGHTING

You are adept at maneuvering and fighting in tight spaces and underground passages.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: When squeezing into or through a tight space, you do not take a penalty on your attack rolls or to your Armor Class.

Normal: Each movement into or through a narrow space counts as if it were 2 squares, and while squeezed in a narrow space, you take a –4 penalty on your attack rolls and a –4 penalty to your Armor Class (*PH* 148).

Special: A fighter can select Tunnel Fighting as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH* 38).

UNDERMOUNTAIN TACTICS [TACTICAL]

Dwarves have developed a variety of cunning tactics to defeat those foolish enough to enter their mountain redoubts. While gnomes lack the dwarves' militaristic streak, they too have refined these tactics in countless battles against kobolds and goblins.

Prerequisites: Dwarf or gnome; or base attack bonus +6 and Knowledge (dungeoneering) 2 ranks.

Benefit: The Undermountain Tactics feat enables the use of certain tactical maneuvers, described below.

Stair King: To use this maneuver, you must gain the high ground bonus on your attacks against an opponent. If you hit your foe with two or more melee attacks during your turn, he must make a Balance check (DC 10 + your Str modifier) or be knocked prone. Your opponent can opt to succeed automatically on his Balance check. If he does so, he will lose his move action on his next turn, but he will succeed automatically on Balance checks to resist this maneuver until the start of his next turn. Your opponent must make this choice before seeing the result of his Balance check. You can target a particular creature with this maneuver once per round.

Tunnel Fighter: To use this maneuver, you must be the target of at least one melee attack from at least one foe while standing with walls adjacent to you on two or more sides. When you are attacked under such conditions, you gain a +2 bonus to Armor Class due to cover. (If you gain cover from another source, this benefit does not stack with it.) You also block line of sight for any spells or attacks made by your opponents, though your allies can fire through your space as normal.

Door Sentinel: To use this maneuver, you must fight defensively while adjacent to or standing in a doorway, a gate, or a similar opening in a wall. You must be adjacent to or standing in each square across the doorway's width. For 1 round after you fight defensively, you gain a +4 bonus on Strength or Dexterity checks to resist bull rush or trip attacks. Any creature attempting a Tumble check to avoid your attack of opportunity takes a –5 penalty on the check. Any creature attempting to tumble through your space takes a –10 penalty on its check.

Special: A fighter can select Undermountain Tactics as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH* 38).

WEAPON AND TORCH [STYLE]

You have mastered a style of fighting that uses a melee weapon and a torch to devastating effect. You can dazzle and burn your opponent with the open flame.

Benefit: While fighting with a one-handed melee weapon and holding a lit torch in the other hand, you can make a special attack as a full-round action. Attack once with your melee weapon. If the attack hits, you also sweep your torch across your foe's eyes, dealing 1d6 points of fire damage and dazzling him for 1d4 rounds. You can also use this feat while wielding a lit lantern, a sunrod, or an *everburning torch* in your off hand, although items that do not give off heat do not deal fire damage.

DUNGEON TEAMWORK

When members of a group work together, they greatly increase their chance of success. Nowhere is this more true than in a dungeon. Teamwork benefits (DMG2 189) allow the PCs to perform tasks more effectively through cooperation.

To gain a teamwork benefit, all members of a team must practice together for two weeks. In addition, all members must meet the team member prerequisites, and the leader must meet the task leader prerequisites and have an Intelligence score of 8 or higher. Teams must consist of two to eight members, and must keep up their training by working together for four weeks each year. This required training can occur as part of the standard training that characters go through when they gain levels.

A team gets one teamwork benefit for every 4 Hit Dice the lowest-level member has. The following new teamwork benefits describe the required training, the prerequisites for team members and leaders, the benefit to team members, and tips for using the benefit.

CLIMBING SQUAD

Your team has developed a method to climb surfaces safely and quickly.

Training: Your team must spend a great deal of time climbing as a group, studying each other's technique and learning from the team's best climber. With practice, members of a climbing squad can scale most surfaces easily.

Task Leader Prerequisites: Climb 8 ranks.

Team Member Prerequisites: Climb 1 rank.

Benefit: When encountering a surface to be scaled, the task leader must climb it first. Upon reaching the top (or another safe point along the climb), the leader can use the aid another action to grant a +4 bonus (instead of the usual +2) to each other member who attempts the climb. In addition, each member after the task leader can attempt accelerated climbing and take a –2 penalty to the Climb check. To grant these benefits, the task leader must direct each member for his entire climb (a move action).

Tips: Despite the benefits, climbers who wear heavy armor and have high check penalties still find it difficult to scale smooth or slippery surfaces. Knotted ropes prove helpful in most cases.

SEARCH TEAM

Your team is skilled at finding secret doors and traps much faster than normal.

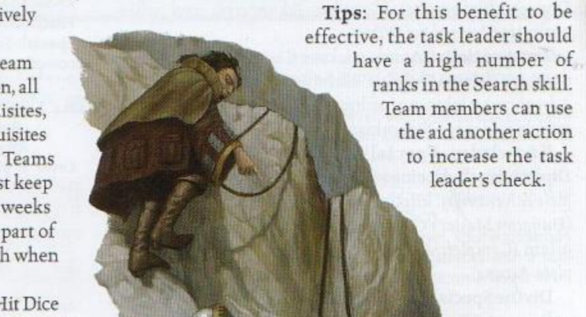
Training: By assigning members to look for specific clues, your team has developed a routine to find secret doors and traps quickly by alerting the task leader to any anomalies.

Task Leader Prerequisite: Search 5 ranks, trap sense +1.

Team Member Prerequisite: Search 1 rank.

Benefit: As a full-round action, the task leader can apply his Search check result to every square searched by a member of the team (excluding the task leader).

Tips: For this benefit to be effective, the task leader should have a high number of ranks in the Search skill. Team members can use the aid another action to increase the task leader's check.



Adventurers practice for an upcoming expedition

Illus. by C. Frank

PRESTIGE CLASSES

Dungeoneers have a wide variety of options when choosing a prestige class. While few prestige classes focus on dungeon survival, they still have abilities that prove quite useful in such environments. Consider the following prestige classes for each vital character role.

Melee Combat Specialist: Dervish (*Complete Warrior*), divine crusader (*Complete Divine*), deepwarden (*Races of Stone*), dwarven defender (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), frenzied berserker (*Complete Warrior*), holy liberator (*Complete Divine*), knight of the chalice (*Complete Warrior*), outcast champion (*Races of Destiny*), and shadowbane inquisitor (*Complete Adventurer*).

Stealth Specialist: Dark hunter (*Complete Warrior*), dungeon delver (*Complete Adventurer*), exemplar (*Complete Adventurer*), nightsong enforcer (*Complete Adventurer*), nightsong infiltrator (*Complete Adventurer*), shadowbane stalker (*Complete Adventurer*), shadowdancer (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), temple raider of Olidammara (*Complete Divine*), thief-acrobat (*Complete Adventurer*), and whisperknife (*Races of the Wild*).

Trap Specialist: Arcane trickster (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), dungeon delver (*Complete Adventurer*), exemplar (*Complete Adventurer*), nightsong infiltrator (*Complete Adventurer*), and temple raider of Olidammara (*Complete Divine*).

Knowledge Specialist: Divine oracle (*Complete Divine*), earth dreamer (*Races of Stone*), exemplar (*Complete Adventurer*), loredelver (*Races of Destiny*), loremaster (*Dungeon Master's Guide*), mindbender (*Complete Arcane*), ollam (*Complete Adventurer*), and sublime chord (*Complete Arcane*).

Divine Specialist: Hunter of the dead (*Complete Warrior*), radiant servant of Pelor (*Complete Divine*), sacred exorcist (*Complete Divine*), and warpriest (*Complete Divine*).

In addition to these options, two new prestige classes—the beast heart adept and the trapsmith—make fine choices for aspiring dungeoneers. The beast heart adept learns to train many of the monsters found in dungeons and use them as companions. The trapsmith is a master of traps, capable of setting up booby traps quickly to confound and hurt foes. In addition, a third prestige class—the dungeon lord—offers a special suite of abilities for NPC villains who set themselves up as rulers of dungeons.

BEAST HEART ADEPT

"I'd rather not travel with your band. Here in the dungeon, I'll stick with my companions. They talk less and fight harder."

—Daktar Goretusk, half-orc beast heart adept

Adventurers face monsters every time they descend into a new dungeon. Most view the creatures as horrid abominations that want nothing more than to cut them down where they stand. However, the beast heart adept sees through a monster's frightening visage. By attuning himself to the bestial urges of dungeon creatures, he learns to form powerful bonds with a small number of monsters. These creatures become his devoted allies, and together they form a potent fighting combination.

BECOMING A BEAST HEART ADEPT

The role of a beast heart adept is not an easy one. A potential member of this class must throw himself into the rugged, dangerous world beneath the ground. There, he submerges his civilized urges and learns to live as a beast. He uses this experience, along with his knowledge of magic, animal husbandry, and subterranean ecology, to unleash the monstrous creature that hides within his heart. Once he completes this process, he becomes capable of forming a powerful bond with certain creatures.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Handle Animal 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks.

Feats: Animal Affinity.

Special: Spend at least one week living alone in a dungeon complex.

TABLE 3–2: THE BEAST HEART ADEPT **HIT DIE: D8**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Monstrous companion, monster empathy, monster handler
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Monster lore
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Alternative monstrous companion
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Monstrous flank
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Extra monstrous companion
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+5	—
7th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+5	Monstrous tactics
8th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+6	—
9th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+6	Extra monstrous companion
10th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+7	Monstrous team-up

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Climb, Concentration, Craft (any), Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Jump, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (the planes), Profession (any), Ride, Survival, Swim.

CLASS FEATURES

A beast heart adept forms something like a pack, with himself at the center and his bestial allies as the members. Under his tutelage and care, these monsters become stronger and tougher. Over time, the beast heart adept learns to optimize his fighting ability when battling alongside his newfound allies.

Monstrous Companion (Ex): You gain the service of a monstrous companion. The creature is similar to a druid's animal companion (*PH* 35), but it is a magical beast or aberration rather than an animal. Choose one of the following as your monstrous companion: ankheg, blink dog, giant eagle, giant owl, hippogriff (4 Hit Dice), krenshar (4 Hit Dice), otyugh, owlbear, pegasus, or worg. Except for the hippogriff and the krenshar, which are larger than normal, the monster is typical of its kind. If its Intelligence is greater than 2, the companion has the same alignment as you.

If you have levels in other classes (such as druid or ranger) that give you the ability to have an animal companion, those levels do not stack with your beast heart adept levels for the purpose of determining which kinds of monstrous companions you can select (and what the abilities of those companions are).

At 3rd level or higher, you can select from alternative lists of monsters (see the sidebar). Just as with a druid's alternative animal companion, an alternative monstrous companion gains abilities as if your beast heart adept class level were lower than it actually is.

Monster Empathy (Ex): You can use body language, vocalization, and demeanor to improve the attitude of a magical beast such as a chimera or a gorgon. This ability functions like the druid's wild empathy class feature (PH 35), except that it affects magical beasts regardless of their Intelligence score.

You can also use this ability to influence an animal (such as a dire bear) or an aberration that has an Intelligence score of 1 or 2 (such as a rust monster), but you take a –4 penalty on the check.

If you have the wild empathy ability from another class, add your levels in that class to your beast heart adept level when influencing magical beasts or animals. In addition, you no longer take a penalty to your monster empathy check when influencing animals. If you have 5 or more ranks in the Handle Animal skill, you gain a +2 bonus on your monster empathy checks.

MONSTROUS COMPANIONS

The beast heart adept's monstrous companion is superior to a normal animal of its kind and has special powers, as described below.

Class Level	Bonus HD	Natural Armor Adj.	Str/Con Adj.	Bonus Tricks	Special
1st–2nd	+0	+0	+0	1	Link
3rd–4th	+2	+2	+2	2	Evasion
5th–6th	+4	+4	+4	3	Devotion
7th–8th	+6	+6	+6	4	—
9th–10th	+8	+8	+8	5	Improved evasion

Monstrous Companion Basics: Use the base statistics for a creature of the companion's kind as given in the *Monster Manual*, but make the following changes.

Class Level: Use the character's beast heart adept level.

Bonus HD: Add this number to the base creature's existing Hit Dice. Extra Hit Dice improve a monstrous companion's base attack bonus and base save bonuses, and grant it additional feats and skill points (for details, see Improving Monsters, *MM* 290). Monstrous companions do not increase in size as a result of these extra Hit Dice.

Natural Armor Adj.: Add this number to the base creature's existing natural armor bonus.

Str/Con Adj.: Add this number to the base creature's Strength score and Constitution score.

Bonus Tricks: The value in this column is the number of bonus tricks known by the monstrous companion, in addition to any other tricks the beast heart adept might teach it. These bonus tricks do not require training time or Handle Animal checks, and they do not count against the normal limit of tricks known by the monstrous companion. The beast heart adept selects these bonus tricks, and once selected, they cannot be changed. Only monstrous companions that have an Intelligence score of 1 or 2 must be taught to perform a trick; smarter monsters can be directed verbally.

Link (Ex): A beast heart adept can handle his monstrous companion as a free action, or push it as a move action. The beast heart adept gains a +4 circumstance bonus on monster empathy checks and Handle Animal checks regarding a monstrous companion.

Evasion (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, your monstrous companion can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save. See the monk class feature (*PH* 41).

Devotion (Ex): A monstrous companion's devotion to its master is so complete that it gains a +4 morale bonus on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects.

Improved Evasion (Ex): Beginning at 9th level, your monstrous companion can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save and take only half damage on a failed save. See the monk class feature (*PH* 42).

ALTERNATIVE MONSTROUS COMPANIONS

A beast heart adept of sufficiently high level can select his monstrous companion from one of the following lists. Apply the indicated adjustment to the beast heart adept's level (in parentheses) when determining the monster's characteristics and special abilities.

3rd Level or Higher (Level –2)
Digester
Girallon
Manticore
Winter wolf

5th Level or Higher (Level –4)
Chimera
Wyvern

7th Level or Higher (Level –6)
Chuul
Destrachan
Dragonne

9th Level or Higher (Level –8)
Behir
Gray render
Yrthak

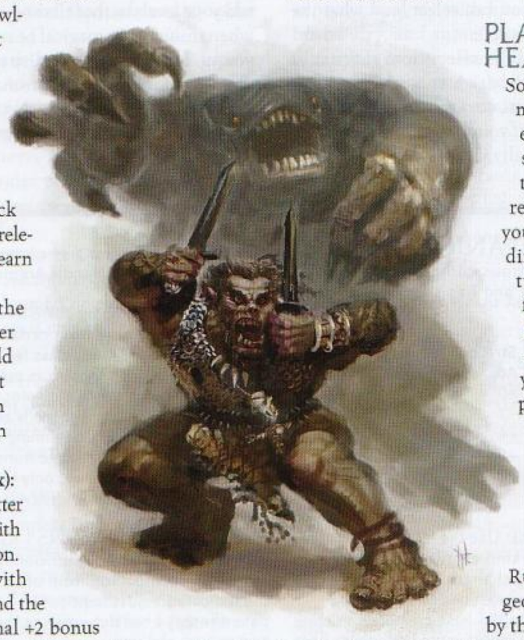
Illus. by T. Nordstrand

Monster Handler (Ex): You can make Handle Animal checks with regard to magical beasts and aberrations without penalty. This ability applies only to creatures that have an Intelligence score of 1 or 2. Magical beasts and aberrations that have higher Intelligence scores cannot be controlled by Handle Animal at all.

Monster Lore (Ex): At 2nd level, you gain uncanny knowledge about all types of living monsters, including their habitats, behavior, abilities, and weaknesses. You can make a special monster lore check to identify monsters or their special abilities or vulnerabilities. The check functions as a Knowledge check (PH 78), except the monster lore check can identify any living creature. You gain a bonus on this check equal to your beast heart adept level + your Int modifier. You can attempt this check in addition to making the relevant Knowledge check to learn about a creature.

If you have levels in the bard class or the loremaster prestige class, you can add those levels to your beast heart adept levels when determining the bonus on the monster lore check.

Monstrous Flank (Ex): At 4th level, you learn to better coordinate your attacks with your monstrous companion. When you form a flank with a companion, both you and the creature gain an additional +2 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls against the flanked opponent.



A beast heart adept and his monstrous companion

Extra Monstrous Companion (Ex): At 5th level, you gain a second monstrous companion, chosen from the list of companions available to a 1st-level beast heart adept. Treat your beast heart adept class level as if it were four levels lower for the purpose of determining the monster's abilities (or of selecting an alternative companion at higher levels).

At 9th level, you gain a third monstrous companion, chosen from the list of companions available to a 1st-level beast heart adept. Treat your beast heart adept class level as if it were eight levels lower for the purpose of determining the monster's abilities (or of selecting an alternative companion at higher levels).

Monstrous Tactics (Ex): Starting at 7th level, you and your monstrous companions make an excellent team. Through coordination and practice, you have learned to optimize your combined efforts. When one of your monstrous companions strikes an opponent with a melee attack, the target provokes an attack of opportunity from you. With this ability, you can make an attack of opportunity against a particular target once per round.

In addition, your companions do not grant cover against your enemies when you use ranged attacks or spells.

Monstrous Team-Up (Ex): When you reach 10th level, all the members of your adventuring party now gain the benefits of your monstrous flank and monstrous tactics abilities. Any references to "you" in those abilities now include your allies.

PLAYING A BEAST HEART ADEPT

Sometimes you shun other humanoids, but you are always at ease among the strange monsters that form your pack, talking and singing to them regularly. You enjoy watching your monster allies in action, directing their movements to turn them into an efficient fighting machine. As the leader of your pack, you revel in your victories and mourn your losses. In the end, the pack must survive.

The dungeon is your home. In fact, some powerful beast heart adepts wander into the deepest subterranean levels and are never seen again. Rumors abound of entire dungeons having been taken over by the mightiest adepts and their countless minions. Adventurers who enter these places are allowed to leave, as long as they do not harm the creatures that live there. Should the intruders attack, a considerate beast heart adept might hang their skulls at the dungeon's entrance to warn other fools. Evil beast heart adepts spread stories of the great wealth to be found in their dungeons, the better to lure victims who bring magic weapons and items.

Combat

You are a member of a pack, and in battle you seek to maximize the combination of your abilities and those of your monstrous companions. If you specialize in ranged attacks, choose companions that have a high number of hit points and can hold back the enemy. If you favor melee combat, pick mobile companions that hit hard so that you can form deadly flanks.

Abilities that improve your companions' fighting prowess are doubly useful. Bardic music abilities, spells such as *bull's strength*, and so on make your entire pack more deadly.

In most cases, a monstrous companion will not be able to handle the toughest foes you face. For example, if you encounter a hill giant and a number of trolls, send your companion against the trolls—the giant might be able to squash it with a single blow. Let your companion hold back the trolls while the rest of your adventuring party battles the main threat.

While you see your monstrous companions as members of your pack, do not neglect your fellow adventurers. Your ankheg companion can stand beside the party's wizard to guard her against attackers, while your manticore can carry the rogue over the enemy and drop him in a flanking position.

Advancement

Handle Animal is the most obvious skill choice, though Diplomacy can be just as useful if your monstrous companions are intelligent. An even distribution of Knowledge skills can keep you informed about any creature you might face. If one of your companions can serve as a mount, spend a few skill points on Ride, and consider taking Mounted Combat and the associated feats. Leadership is also an excellent choice, if your DM allows it. A monstrous cohort (such as a kuo-toa cleric or a minotaur barbarian) will deepen your bond with beasts while bolstering your party's strength.

Resources

Most rational adventurers prefer to kill monsters rather than keep them, so you have few peers when it comes to training your monstrous companions. Any beast heart adepts you meet, however, are eager to talk shop. You also have a tenuous relationship with druids and rangers. While they often agree with you on the principle of communing with beasts, they question your choice of companions. They cannot understand how someone could admire monsters the way they value animals.

You have a kinship with professional animal trainers, particularly those who train unusual mounts for local knights. They might provide you with feed and a stable when you come to town, though the smaller the community, the more questions your "pets" will raise. It is best to leave your more intelligent companions in the wilderness (with a prearranged rendezvous time) rather than risk bringing them into a city that will not tolerate their presence.

BEAST HEART ADEPTS IN THE WORLD

"Did you see that—that—that thing go by? Monsters, here, in our fine city? I tell you, I never thought I'd see the day. Scandalous!"

—Lucius Araphani, aristocrat

Beast heart adepts usually dwell on the outskirts of civilization, disparaged as adventurers who became fascinated with their opponents. Many are eccentric hermits, living with their monstrous companions and shunning a world that does not understand their special relationships. The monsters are odd pets and helpers, aiding the beast heart adept with mundane tasks. The juxtaposition of deadly dungeon creatures and the daily chores of rural life can be unnerving, to say the least—just ask anyone who has seen a chimera painting a barn.

Organization

Beast heart adepts have no formal organization of their own, but many are loosely associated with local dungeoneering guilds. Not only are beast heart adepts valuable allies when exploring below ground, but they also train inexperienced adventurers by providing real monsters for use in nonlethal battles. However, beast heart adepts usually remain outside the hierarchy of the guild, whose members both need and disdain them. The sole advantages for beast heart adepts are compensation (feeding monsters is expensive) and legitimacy. With proper papers from the guild, beast heart adepts can bring their monsters into a city without arousing the ire of the local authorities.

Beast heart adepts who used to be druids often retain ties to whatever formal organization they had joined previously. Essentially, they are specialists among druids, focusing on magical beasts instead of animals. Druids grudgingly admit that most of a beast heart adept's companions have as much a place in the natural world as any animal, and they call upon the nearest beast heart adept when they need to remove a monster from their region. Just as with the dungeoneering guilds, however, beast heart adepts cannot advance in druid society beyond the rank of "distasteful but necessary."

NPC Reactions

Most people see the monsters long before they notice the master, if they notice him at all. In civilized areas, the majority of townsfolk are hostile to monsters, and by extension to the beast heart adept who brought them. However, commoners are indifferent to a beast heart adept who travels solely with companions that are known for their good temperament or that are used as mounts, such as hippogriffs, giant eagles, or griffons. Still, these creatures are fairly unusual, and the beast heart adept probably treats them more like friends than beasts of burden, anyway.

In wilderness regions, NPC attitudes improve. Seasoned adventurers are indifferent to a beast heart adept and his monsters, no matter what their breeds, once informed that these particular creatures are not for slaying. Druids and rangers are friendly to a beast heart adept whose companions are magical beasts. They appreciate his intentions, even if they find his methods strange. If he has any aberrations in his pack, however, druids and their ilk are merely indifferent.

Monsters react differently only if a beast heart adept keeps one of their own kind. Creatures that have an Intelligence score of 1 or 2 regard any monstrous companion of the same race as friendly. Smarter monsters treat similar creatures indifferently, unless the companion's alignment has changed significantly as a result of serving its master. For example, a lawful good blink dog might become neutral evil while serving as a monstrous companion. In such cases, others of its kind treat the companion with open hostility, considering it a perversion to be destroyed. The beast heart adept is treated with equal hostility for bending the creature's nature to his will.

BEAST HEART ADEPT LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research beast heart adepts to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Some adventurers would rather learn about monsters than fight them. They call themselves "beast heart adepts."

DC 15: Beast heart adepts train and befriend common dungeon monsters. They keep to themselves, mostly, but you'll never find anyone who knows more about the ways of monsters. They're your best bet for firsthand knowledge about all kinds of creatures.

DC 20: Many beast heart adepts are former druids who have given up contact with the outside world, sick of trying to explain their fascination with monsters. Just because a particular creature is typically evil, that doesn't mean a beast heart adept who trains one is evil, too. Somehow, he can convince even the nastiest monsters to see things his way.

Beast heart adepts live far from civilization, which can make them difficult to find. Luckily, when they come to town, the locals rarely forget it. A successful DC 15 Gather Information check will tell the PCs whether a beast heart adept has passed through the community in the last few years, though the story will grow in the telling. A successful DC 25 Gather Information check will put the PCs in contact with an animal trainer who has an acquaintance who has a friend who knows a beast heart adept. However, most trainers respect a beast heart adept's desire for privacy, so the adventurers will have to persuade the trainer to lead them to the reclusive pack leader.

BEAST HEART ADEPTS IN THE GAME

It can be a challenge to add beast heart adepts to a campaign, but no more of a challenge than adding a character who has the Leadership feat. The presence of monstrous companions will complicate combat encounters, but the beast heart adept's player controls the creatures, so most of the burden will remain with him. Furthermore, as the PCs attain higher levels, they will gain more power than the monstrous companions will, relegating some of the creatures to noncombat functions.

Cities are the bane of a beast heart adept; an urban adventure will likely deprive him of most of his class features. Dungeon crawls, on the other hand, are his specialty, allowing him and his odd companions to explore the setting for which they were created.

Players who like outlandish characters will enjoy playing a beast heart adept. Perhaps they previously considered playing a member of a bizarre race just for the fun of it, or maybe they obsess over the details of every monster they face. This prestige class allows them to put different monsters through their paces and learn how the creatures handle combat. The class might also appeal to strategists because it lets them direct several combatants in battle and thus have more control over the tactical situation.

Adaptation

Some campaigns might include organizations of beast heart adepts that focus on one specific monster (or one group of monsters) to the exclusion of others. For example, a beast heart adept guild might train aerial creatures to defend a mountaintop city, adding hippogriffs, giant eagles, griffons, and pegasi to the city's garrison. Such trainers might call themselves "aeriemasters" instead. On the other hand, orc wolfmasters could be bound to packs of worgs and winter wolves, leading them in war against their hated elf rivals. In both cases, consider replacing the monster empathy and monster lore abilities with other minor powers more suited to a narrow focus.

Sample Encounter

Beast heart adepts often consider particular dungeons their stomping grounds. If they catch wind of a group of PC intruders, they might demand tribute or some other sign that the adventurers acknowledge their rule. Beast heart adepts can be difficult to handle, particularly since many of them disdain society's rules, but turning one into an ally is a major coup. Few know a dungeon as well as a beast heart adept who calls it his home.

EL 9: Daktar Goretusk prowls the upper levels of the Dungeon of the Emerald Eye. He uses a series of long-forgotten secret passages dug by the diabolic monks who built the maze of halls. The dungeon's other inhabitants are unaware of the hidden tunnels, allowing Daktar and his girallon ally Bonecracker to come and go as they please. Daktar hates the fire giants that populate the dungeon because they slew Howler, his wolf companion. Adventurers who show him the proper respect gain him as an ally. More important, he shares the secrets of the dungeon's hidden passages.

DAKTAR GORETUSK **CR 9**

Male half-orc ranger 5/beast heart adept 4
CG Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Orc

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16
(–1 Dex, +6 armor, +1 natural)
hp 62 (9 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 short sword* +14/+9 (1d6+4) or
Melee *+1 short sword* +12/+7 (1d6+4) and
+1 short sword +12 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12
Atk Options favored enemy giants +4, favored enemy undead +2, Power Attack
Special Actions monstrous flank
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 2nd):
1st—*longstrider*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 10
SQ monster empathy, monster handler, monster lore, monstrous companion, animal companion, wild empathy
Feats Animal Affinity, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus
Skills Handle Animal +14, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +11, Listen +2, Move Silently +7, Ride +3, Spot +2, Survival +14 (+16 underground)
Possessions *+2 mithral shirt, amulet of natural armor +1, dust of tracelessness*

BONECRACKER CR —

Male girallon
N Large magical beast
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +1, Spot +6

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15
(–1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 58 (7 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), swim 40 ft.
Melee mwk trident +5 (1d8) or
Melee 4 claws +12 (1d4+6) and
bite +7 (1d8+3)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +17
Atk Options rend 2d4+9

Abilities Str 22, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7
SQ link
Feats Iron Will, Toughness (2)
Skills Climb +14, Listen +1, Move Silently +8, Spot +6
Link (Ex) As per the beast heart adept monstrous companion ability.
Rend (Ex) If Bonecracker hits an opponent with two or more claw attacks, he automatically latches on and deals and extra 2d4+9 points of damage.

TRAPSMITH

"That, my friends, is what we in the trade call a blood melon. A nasty little trap designed to fire razor-tipped darts into your head when you bend down to look through the keyhole. Stand back—I'll take care of this."

—Kalder Phentley, trapsmith

Many adventurers view traps as nuisances—just more obstacles to be overcome—but some see traps as an art form. Similar to a rogue in many respects, a trapsmith hones her craft to a level of perfection that few can hope to emulate. Simple and crude traps offend her, and complicated death traps cause her to leap about (cautiously, of course) in wonderment and joy. More than just an expert at disarming devices, a trapsmith excels at rigging deadly surprises to harm her enemies, secure her camp, and confound pursuers.

BECOMING A TRAPSMITH

A trapsmith needs a high number of skills and the trapfinding class feature, so many members of this prestige class begin their careers as rogues. Other classes can qualify, including ninjas, scouts, and spellthieves (all from *Complete Adventurer*), factotums (see page 14), and rangers who have the trap expert alternative class feature (see page 12). But rogues have the easiest time of it.

Because the trapsmith is a skill-based character, she must have a high Intelligence score. A high Dexterity score also proves to be of great value, adding to a number of her skills.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) 8 ranks, Disable Device 8 ranks, Open Lock 5 ranks, Search 8 ranks.
Special: Trapfinding class feature.

CLASS FEATURES

As a trapsmith, your abilities revolve around using mundane traps and magic traps to your advantage. After attaining only a few levels, you are the most qualified member of your party at dealing with traps, and your abilities allow you to protect your fellows in a number of ways. Versatility is key when designing your

TABLE 3–3: THE TRAPSMITH **HIT DIE: D6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1st	2nd	3rd
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Booby traps (simple), master disarmer, trap sense +1	1	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Arrow proof, quick fingers	2	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Booby traps (advanced), unweave, trap sense +2	2	1	—
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Dance through danger, spell proof	3	2	—
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Avoid disaster, trap sense +3	3	2	1

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Craft, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Listen, Open Lock, Profession, Search, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Use Rope.

character, because while traps are a common danger, they are not always present. Make sure to carry plenty of supplies so that you can make your own traps to use against enemies.

Booby Traps (Ex): You can quickly set up simple booby traps (see the sidebar) to harm and hinder your foes. When setting up a trap, make a Craft (trapmaking) check. The check result is the Difficulty Class of an attempt to find the trap by making a Search check. Half the check result is the DC of an attempt to disarm the trap by making a Disable Device check. The check result affects other variables, too; see the Booby Trap sidebar below for details. Setting up a booby trap is usually a full-round action, though some take longer, as noted in the sidebar.

Starting at 3rd level, your skill improves such that you can create advanced versions of the simple booby traps you already know.

Master Disarmer (Ex): Your skill at finding and disarming traps is legendary. When dealing with a trap, add your trapsmith level to your Search checks, Disable Device checks, and Open Lock checks.

Trap Sense (Ex): You are adept at evading the effects of traps, gaining bonuses at 1st level, 3rd level, and 5th level. See the barbarian class feature (PH 26). Trap sense gained from other sources (such as barbarian or rogue levels) stacks with this benefit.

Spells: If you are smart enough, you might gain the ability to cast arcane spells. To cast a particular spell, you must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Your bonus spells are based on your Intelligence. Saves to avoid the effects of your spells have a DC of 10 + the spell's level + your Int bonus (if any).

You cast spells as a bard does. Table 1–4, below, details how many spells you can learn at each level. Choose your spells from the following list.

1st—*arcane sight, cat's grace, clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fox's cunning, gaseous form, haste, knock, protection from energy.*

2nd—*arcane eye, dimension door, lesser globe of invulnerability, Otiluke's resilient sphere, stoneskin, stone shape.*

3rd—*Bigby's interposing hand, break enchantment, fabricate, greater dispel magic, wall of stone.*

BOOBY TRAPS

A trapsmith can create a number of different traps to hinder and harm foes. Each trap described below includes information on its area, effects, base cost, and cost per use. The base cost covers the parts of the trap that are reusable if recovered. The cost per use covers the pieces that are destroyed or expended when the trap is set off. All traps below are mechanical traps with a touch trigger.

A trapsmith can disable and disassemble one of his own traps without making a check. This process takes approximately 1 minute.

Other booby traps are possible with your DM's approval.

Alarm Trap: This trap is little more than a series of bells attached to a thin trip wire. When the wire is breached, the bells ring, and those nearby can attempt a DC –5 Listen check to notice the noise. This trap takes 1 round to set up per 10 feet of trip wire used. Anyone who runs into the trap can attempt a Reflex save to avoid setting it off (DC equal to 1/2 your Craft [trapmaking] check result).

Base Cost: 1 gp/10 ft.

Cost/Use: —.

Advanced Version: The DC of the Reflex save to avoid setting off an advanced alarm trap is equal to your Craft (trapmaking) check result.

Bolt Trap: This trap fires a light or heavy crossbow at one target that breaks a trip wire. The crossbow makes a single attack with a bonus equal to 1/2 your Craft (trapmaking) check result. The bolt deals standard damage for its type, but you can use masterwork or magic crossbows and bolts to enhance the accuracy or damage. The trap must be reset after the crossbow fires. The trap can cover a line of up to 20 feet.

Base Cost: 35 gp (light crossbow) or 50 gp (heavy crossbow); add 300 gp for a masterwork crossbow.

Cost/Use: None, or the cost of the ammunition if it is masterwork or magic.

Advanced Version: An advanced bolt trap fires up to three bolts from three separate crossbows. Setting up an advanced trap takes 2 rounds and requires three crossbows (tripling the base cost as appropriate to the type).

Drop Trap: A heavy or dangerous item is rigged to fall on anyone who crosses a trip line. When the trip line is breached, the item drops, making a touch attack with a bonus equal to 1/2 your Craft (trapmaking) check result. You can rig an alchemical item (which deals damage appropriate to the item) or a heavy object such as a stone (which deals 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage). The trap can cover a single 5-foot-square area.

Base Cost: 1 sp.

Cost/Use: Varies depending upon the cost of the dropped item.

Advanced Version: An advanced drop trap can drop up to three alchemical items, a very heavy object (which deals 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage), or a net (which entangles the target, who can move freely but must make a successful DC 20 Escape Artist check to get out of the net).

Trip Rope Trap: This trap is made up of a strong rope attached tautly between two points. If anyone tries to cross the rope, it makes a trip attempt with a bonus equal to 1/2 your Craft (trapmaking) check result. The first creature to cross through the trap causes the rope to go slack, and it must be reset before the trap can be used again. The trap can cover a line of up to 20 feet.

Base Cost: 10 gp.

Cost/Use: —.

Advanced Version: An advanced trip rope trap makes the trip attempt using your Craft (trapmaking) check result for the opposed check. In addition, if the check succeeds, the trap can trip another creature that crosses through its space.

Table 3–4: Trapsmith Spells Known

	— Spells Known —		
Level	1st	2nd	3rd
1st	2	—	—
2nd	3	—	—
3rd	3	2	—
4th	4	3	—
5th	4	3	2

Arrow Proof (Su): When a trap activates, you know how to lessen the impact and reduce the damage. Starting at 2nd level, you gain damage reduction 5/— against the effects of traps. The reduction applies only to damage from physical attacks, such as arrows, crushing blocks, or pits. Damage caused by spells or magical effects is not reduced.

Damage reduction gained from multiple sources stacks, but only for damage dealt by a trap.

Quick Fingers (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, you can disarm traps more quickly. When you attempt a Disable Device check, use the table below in place of the table on page 72 of the *Player's Handbook*. If you have the quick fingers alternative class feature (see page 13), reduce the time needed for checks on difficult and wicked traps to 1d3 rounds.

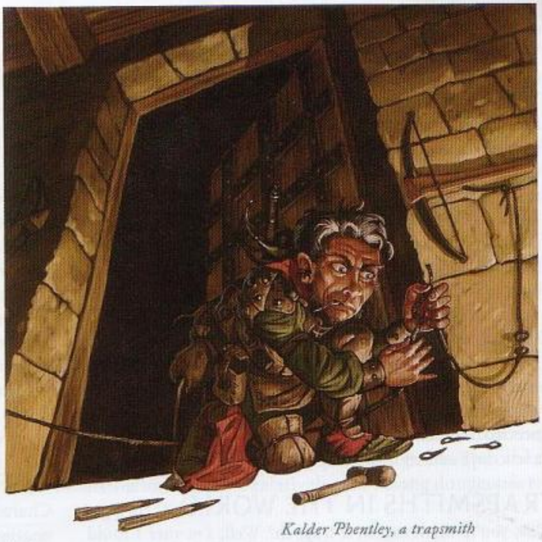
Device	Time	Disable Device DC
Simple	1 standard action	10
Tricky	1 full-round action	15
Difficult	1d4 rounds	20
Wicked	1d4 rounds	25+

Unweave (Su): At 3rd level, your understanding of magic traps allows you to unweave their magic, as if targeting the trap with *dispel magic* (PH 223). Your caster level for this ability equals 5 + your trapsmith level. You can use this ability three times per day. It works only against magic traps, but spells such as *alarm* (PH 197), *glyph of warding* (PH 236), and the *symbol* spells (PH 289–291) are valid targets.

Dance through Danger (Ex): Starting at 4th level, when you make a Search check to find a trap and your result exceeds the DC by 5 or more, you can move past the trap without setting it off. This benefit applies only to you—the careful movements and balance needed cannot be taught to your fellow adventurers.

Spell Proof (Su): Starting at 4th level, you enjoy a measure of protection against magic traps. You gain spell resistance equal to 15 + your trapsmith level. This spell resistance applies only to magic traps, which include spells such as *fire trap* (PH 231), *explosive runes* (PH 228), *glyph of warding* (PH 236), and the *symbol* spells (PH 289–291).

Avoid Disaster (Su): At 5th level, you learn to negate the effects of a trap as they happen. Once per day, when a trap is sprung, you can make a Disable Device check as an immediate action. If the check succeeds, you quickly disable the trap and avoid its effects. If the check fails, the trap activates as normal.



Kalder Phentley, a trapsmith

PLAYING A TRAPSMITH

Traps are your profession, and even the most deadly of them fail to daunt you. Whenever a new contraption is encountered, you want to be the first to examine it, figure out how it works, and try to disarm it. Success shows that your knowledge and skill are superior to that of the trap's builder. Failure, while disappointing, teaches you a valuable lesson that should never be forgotten.

Traps of your own design are your pride and joy. Your home is littered with working traps and half-finished contraptions that you constantly tinker with. When exploring, you always carry a few components for booby traps because you never know when you might need one.

Combat

Combat is dirty business, not at all like the challenge of a well-designed trap. Any brute can swing an axe or pummel with a fist. While you do not shy away from battle, you are a thinking combatant, always looking for the best position or tactic. You frequently use combat maneuvers such as trip, disarm, and aid another to get the job done. Let the barbarian deliver the killing blow to foes that you set up for him.

If a fight occurs near a trap, try to entice your foes into activating it. When creating traps of your own design, place them in locations where they cannot be ignored or bypassed.

Illus. by W. Mahy

Advancement

To build on the abilities granted by the trapsmith prestige class, take levels in other classes that enhance your role. The rogue, ninja, scout, and spellthief classes work well in this regard, giving you abilities that complement your trap expertise. Sneaking ahead of the party to set up a trip rope trap and then luring foes into it exemplifies this synergy.

The spellcasting classes are good choices, too, because many spells act as traps or help you deal with traps. Similarly, do not overlook the bard class, which allows you to bolster your companions in multiple ways.

Resources

Trapsmiths have no formal organization, but small groups of these specialists occasionally gather to show off their work. You can count on basic aid from your fellows if needed, but do not expect more than room and board for a few days and rudimentary supplies.

TRAPSMITHS IN THE WORLD

"So, you're interested in a trap, eh? Well, I'm sure I could build you the finest, most deadly trap in the world, if you have the coin."

—Jeris "Twitch" Twitolin, trapsmith

Whether they are romping through dungeons logging traps or running a thriving shop in a busy metropolis, trapsmiths make excellent NPCs for a group to encounter. They can provide the expertise needed to determine the builder of a devious trap, to disable an apparently unsolvable contraption, or to construct a new device. Trapsmiths make excellent hirelings or commissioned specialists for PCs who are willing to pay for their brilliance.

Not surprisingly, trapsmiths spend most of their time honing their craft. Many practice on harmless dummy traps, build new variations of classic devices, and sketch wild designs for experimental contraptions. These pursuits lead trapsmiths to every corner of the world as they search for rare parts and study new traps firsthand—sometimes in the middle of a monster-filled dungeon.

To make a living, many trapsmiths who have ranks in Craft (locksmith) quietly build intricate locks, which always seem to be in short supply. Others advertise their talents more actively, constructing all manner of traps for the wealthy and powerful.

However, not all trapsmiths are helpful. Some grow so obsessed with their work that they begin to lure innocent victims into their traps as test subjects. Evil trapsmiths might go so far as to build a whole dungeon of deadly traps and hide a fabulous treasure at the end just to draw adventurers into its halls.

Organization

Lacking their own guild or group, some trapsmiths join guilds of locksmiths, clockmakers, and other professionals with similar talents. Once a year, though, trapsmiths from across the world gather to show off their latest designs and try to best one another with the most foolproof trap. These fascinating competitions are open to the public and allow only nonlethal traps. Unfortunately, zealous contestants have been known to ignore the rules on occasion.

NPC Reactions

Most commoners respect trapsmiths for their skill but view them as eccentric or obsessed. When an NPC hires a trapsmith to build a contraption, she treats him with the utmost respect and tolerates his arrogance and bravado. But when the job is done, she regards him only with suspicion. After all, employers rarely trust someone who knows the secrets of their defenses.

In many towns, the locals talk in hushed tones about the local trapsmith, whose home emanates odd noises and receives even stranger deliveries.

TRAPSMITH LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Knowledge (local) can research trapsmiths to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Traps are difficult and dangerous to handle. Experts in this field are known as trapsmiths.

DC 15: Trapsmiths are highly skilled at locating and disarming traps of all kinds. They are also said to be quite talented at creating such devices.

DC 20: Trapsmiths can set up quick, simple booby traps with ease. Some also cast spells that emulate the effects of traps.

DC 25: Experienced trapsmiths can avoid much of the danger posed by a trap, shrugging off effects that would kill others.

TRAPSMITHS IN THE GAME

It is easy to introduce trapsmiths into nearly any campaign. For example, wherever a particularly trap-laden dungeon exists, the local trapsmith might be cataloging the devices with wonder, or cleaning them out before they claim more explorers' lives. On the other hand, if he was the one who trapped the dungeon in the first place, he might send a party of adventurers through its gate on a phony mission, just so he can test his work. Perhaps the PCs hire a rival trapsmith who is certain she can lead them safely through the dungeon. Or in a race to a prize between two groups of dungeoneers, the party that retains the services of a trapsmith will have a significant edge over its competition.

As a player option, a trapsmith makes a good PC in campaigns that feature plenty of traps. A party that spends all its time in the wilderness will have little use for such a specialist, but explorers who want to clear out a huge dungeon will find a trapsmith a vital ally.

Adaptation

As a fairly generic prestige class, the trapsmith should fit into any campaign setting with little or no adjustment.

Sample Encounter

Few trapsmiths seek direct confrontation, preferring to let their devices speak for them. As such, most encounters with a trapsmith do not involve combat.

EL 9: Jeris "Twitch" Twitolin has a workshop in a major city, but he spends much of his time wandering about, seeking employment and ideas for new traps. When he hears that the PCs are preparing to explore a nearby dungeon, he offers his services as a hireling. In lieu of a hiring fee, Jeris requests an equal share of any treasure found, plus sole rights to any new trap designs encountered.

JERIS "TWITCH" TWITOLIN **CR 9**
Male gnome rogue 5/trapsmith 4
LN Medium humanoid
Init +6; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Gnome

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge (+2 Dex, +5 armor, +1 size)
hp 58 (9 HD); **DR** 5/— (physical traps only; arrow proof)
SR 19 (magic traps only; spell proof)
Fort +6, **Ref** +13, **Will** +3; evasion

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 rapier* +10/+5 (1d4+1/18–20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +10 (1d6/19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +2
Atk Options sneak attack +3d6
Special Actions booby traps (advanced)
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of spider climb* (CL 3rd, 20 charges)
Trapsmith Spells Known (CL 4th):
2nd (3/day)—*dimension door, lesser globe of invulnerability, stoneskin*
1st (4/day)—*cat's grace, dispel magic, haste, knock*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):
3/day—*dispel magic* (traps only)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ dance through danger, master disarmer, quick fingers, trapfinding, trap sense +3, unweave
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Weapon Finesse
Skills Appraise +7 (+9 traps), Balance +4, Climb +5, Craft (trapmaking) +15, Disable Device +15, Hide +14, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +8, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +14, Search +15 (+17 secret doors), Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +12, Tumble +10, Use Rope +6
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 studded leather armor, cloak of resistance +1, hand of the mage,* 2 vials of antitoxin, alarm trap, bolt trap (3 light crossbows with 20 bolts), drop trap (6 vials of alchemist's fire, 1 thunderstone, 2 tanglefoot bags), trip rope trap, collapsible pole*, flour pouch*, hacksaw*, 50 feet of silk rope, 100 feet of twine*
* Described in Chapter 2.

DUNGEONEERING GUILDS

Wherever there are dungeons, there are usually adventurers lurking about, ready to plumb their depths in search of glory and treasure. Some areas are so riddled with these sites that groups of adventurers compete to find and explore them first. When this occurs, groups often band together to pool their resources and gain an edge on their competitors. These dungeoneering guilds provide information, tools, and assistance in exchange for a small cut of treasure garnered by their members. In areas where dungeons are numerous or particularly prosperous, multiple guilds might spring up, competing for the best finds. Such rivalries are usually friendly, but in some circumstances, they can turn dangerous or lead to open warfare.

These guilds use the affiliation rules presented in Chapter 7 of *Player's Handbook II*. While most dungeoneering guilds operate as fighting companies, some take on the mantle of businesses, cabals, or thieves' guilds. The other affiliation types are relatively rare among dungeoneering guilds.

WHY JOIN A GUILD?

Many adventurers see little point in joining a guild that demands a portion of their hard-earned treasure. But those who hold membership in a guild see things differently, garnering special privileges and reaping useful benefits.

While adventurers rely on luck and rumors to locate and learn about a dungeon, guild members research and share their information with other members, spreading the word about unexplored dungeons with ruthless efficiency. While adventurers often hire specialists to deal with dangerous traps, decipher ancient runes, or dispel powerful curses, guild members pool their resources and rely upon fellow members to deal with such problems. And while adventurers pay the full prices charged by temples, smiths, and wizard circles for magic items and custom gear, guilds often have special arrangements to get reduced prices for such goods and equipment.

Members of a dungeoneering guild form lasting bonds and enjoy a camaraderie similar to that of a typical adventuring party. As such, the guilds serve as a way to replenish adventuring groups that have lost members without introducing complete strangers or other possibly untrustworthy individuals.

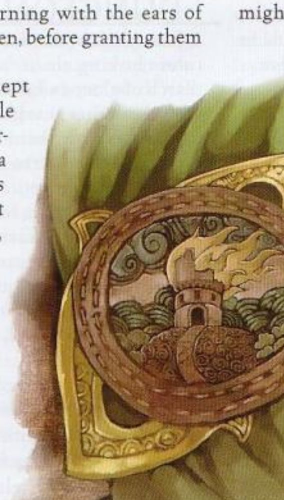
HOW TO JOIN

Membership is relatively simple for most dungeoneering guilds. A small fee and a promise to donate a portion of all future proceeds is enough to garner basic access to the guild's services. Full access comes after a trial period and a set number of successful endeavors or a certain donation amount. Some guilds, however, require that prospective members complete a specified task, such as retrieving a statuette placed in a local dungeon by the guild or returning with the ears of twenty goblins from a local warren, before granting them basic membership.

More esteemed guilds accept only applicants who have noble blood, the sponsorship of a current member, or a relative as a current member. These guilds have small memberships, but what they lack in numbers, they make up for in power and prestige.

GUILD VARIATIONS

From a group of paladins and monks dedicated to eradicating the evils that lurk in forgotten halls to a band of rogues bent on scrounging every piece of copper they can from dusty tombs, all dungeoneering guilds end up in one place—the dungeon. Their individual goals vary greatly, but they share this common purpose, which brings them together while setting them at odds.



Wartower Wardens symbol

The following variations represent only some of the possibilities for dungeoneering guilds.

Treasure Guild: Probably the most common affiliation, a treasure guild seeks as much wealth for itself and its members as possible from local dungeons. While some of these guilds are honest, others resort to thievery and dirty tricks to meet their quotas.

Ownership Guild: Sometimes a dungeon is so large and so well stocked that a guild decides to claim it. Members guard the entrance so that they alone control the flow of wealth from the dungeon's halls. The guards let adventurers pass for a flat fee, or perhaps in exchange for a portion of whatever loot the explorers find below. Guild members can come and go as they please, and as a reward for their loyalty, they give up a lower percentage of treasure. In some kingdoms, the hoards of ancient dungeons are considered the property of the king, and thus ownership guilds issue permits to allow the exploration of such sites, with a percentage going to the crown.

Stillguar

Purpose Guild: Aside from garnering wealth, a purpose guild seeks to accomplish a particular grand goal. An order of powerful wizards might hope to recover the lost fragments of a legendary tome. A group of knights might strive to expunge the evil from all dungeons within a week's ride of their castle. Unfortunately, not all purpose guilds have noble endeavors in mind, seeking instead to release an ancient evil, perhaps, or to establish secret bases of operation.

Guardian Guild: When local dungeons are simply too dangerous, a guardian guild prevents the unwary from entering and keeps the terrors safely sealed within. Guild members venture inside these dungeons only to eliminate spreading threats or to rescue foolhardy explorers who become lost.

SAMPLE GUILDS

Presented below is a fully developed sample guild, the Wartower Wardens, followed by brief looks at two other guilds. Each guild has a different approach and agenda. A DM can easily import them into an established campaign setting, or build on them to create new guilds specifically tailored to her campaign.

THE WARTOWER WARDENS

Symbol: A broken tower with a flame engulfing its top is the symbol of the Wartower Wardens. Members of the guild wear a badge bearing this symbol, or have it worked into the back of a cloak or shield.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: Based at the entrance to a massive dungeon complex just outside a large metropolis, the Wartower Wardens originated as an ownership guild, controlling and taxing wealth pulled up from the halls below. Over the years, the senior leadership of the guild came to believe that great secrets were buried in the dungeon, and they launched plans to investigate.

Today, members of the guild spend a good deal of time exploring the great dungeon or preparing for a future expedition. Occasionally, they are called upon by the guild to perform specific duties in the dungeon, such as retrieving a lost party, seeking a legendary magic item, or uncovering a mysterious

Illus. by J. Hodgson

piece of information. Guild leaders still demand that nonmembers surrender at least a third of any valuables they recover from the dungeon.

Due to the immense size of the dungeon, a single group could easily explore its depths for weeks at a time. Thus, the Wartower Wardens set up a number of supply points in the dungeon that contain basic provisions, messages, and a magic item or two. Opened by command words, these caches are magically resupplied by the guild, and its members know that any message left in a cache is retrieved within a few days.

Few members know, however, that the shadowy director of the Wartower Wardens, an aged dwarf named Stillguar, has a hidden agenda—he wants to find a particular secret that is supposedly hidden away in the dungeon. Stillguar often has guild leaders send rank-and-file members into the dungeon to retrieve rubbings of odd carvings, fragments of crumbling tombs, and strange keys that seem to litter the darkest corridors. These items hold little value, but guild leaders have high regard for members who recover them. It is said that some members have been asked to perform unsavory deeds, such as theft and brute intimidation, to recover such items when they fall into the wrong hands.

Type: Fighting company.

Scale: 5 (city).

Affiliation Score Criteria: Originally limited only to dwarves, the guild has relaxed such restrictions over the years. Today, any explorers who undertake a number of successful (and profitable) journeys into the dungeon are offered membership for a nominal fee of 100 gp. Adventurers need not join the guild to gain access to the dungeon, however. They can simply pay a flat fee on the way in, or surrender a portion of treasure on the way out.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
5 or more ranks in Disable Device	+1
5 or more ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering)	+1
Base attack bonus of +5 or higher	+1
Can cast *locate object*	+1
Can cast *find the path*	+3
Undertakes a successful mission	+1 per mission
Recovers an item important to the guild's leadership	+3 per item
Donates a magic item valued at 1,000 gp or more to the guild	+1 per item (up to three per year)
Fails to properly tithe to the guild after an expedition	−4
Destroys, steals, or loses an item important to the guild's leadership	−8

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Members of the Wartower Wardens tithe only 5% of the loot they find in the dungeon, as opposed to the 33% or higher charged to nonmembers. In addition, members must surrender any items deemed important to the guild's agenda, but they are fairly compensated. Members who achieve a new title are promoted at a monthly celebration in the guildhall.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated.
4–10	**Wartower Initiate:** Recognized as a member of the guild, you can enter the dungeon at any time for free and pay a lower tithe.
11–15	**Wartower Guard:** Gain +2 competence bonus on Disable Device, Open Lock, and Search checks in the dungeon. Learn the command words to open guild caches in the dungeon, though you must pay for any items taken.
16–22	**Wartower Warden:** Gain +2 circumstance bonus on saving throws to avoid the effects of traps in the dungeon. Requisition one 1st- or 2nd-level potion or scroll per month.
23–29	**Wartower Master:** Gain +2 circumstance bonus on initiative checks in the dungeon. Learn the secret of the caches: utter a word of recall to teleport from any cache to the guildhall (your affiliation score drops by 2 each time you use a cache in this way).
30 or higher	**Wartower Councilor:** Once per month, you can borrow a wondrous item of 15,000 gp value or less for 1 week. The Item must be described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and must not be a charged item.

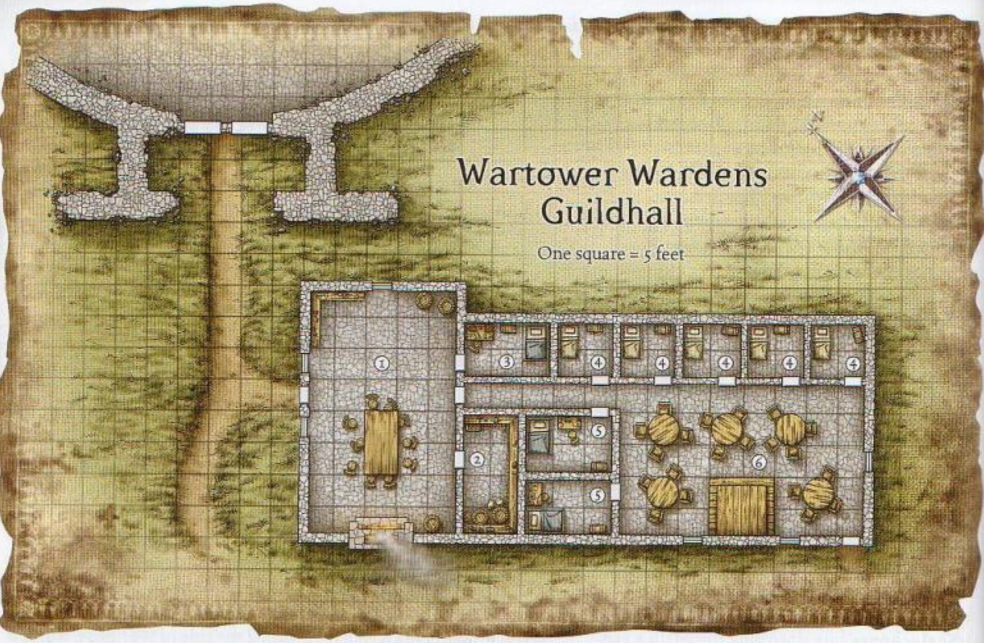
Executive Powers: Gift, plunder, raid.

Membership Options

Members who have attained the title of Wartower Warden can join one of two special groups within the guild. They gain special privileges by doing so, but they must also take on additional responsibilities. Members whose affiliation score drops below 16 are kicked out of these special groups.

Enforcer's Hand: Founded to capture and punish groups that sneak into the dungeon without paying for the privilege, the Enforcer's Hand has evolved into an elite fighting unit. To join, prospective members must prove themselves in rigorous tests (including defeating a CR 7 creature in single combat) and possess either the ability to cast 4th-level spells or a base attack bonus of +7. Once accepted, members are given a +2 weapon of their choice as a sign of their station, and they gain a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls within the dungeon. Any member of the Enforcer's Hand who is found in dereliction of duty immediately loses these benefits, and his affiliation score drops by 10.

Finder's Hand: Reporting to guild director Stillguar, this special group is sent to recover odd treasures and bits of knowledge from deep within the dungeon. Sometimes, members must steal an item back from adventurers who claimed it first. To join the Finder's Hand, prospective members must have at least 8 ranks in Hide, Move Silently, and Sleight of Hand. Once accepted, all members are given *boots of elvenkind* and a *cloak of elvenkind*, and they gain a +2 bonus on initiative checks made to start a surprise round. Members of the Finder's Hand must perform one mission for Stillguar each month. Their affiliation score drops by 1 for each unsuccessful mission.



WARTOWER WARDENS GUILDHALL

Located just outside the entrance of an enormous dungeon is a squat building that has been expanded many times over the years. This building is the home of the Wartower Wardens, and they guard the dungeon's gate in a fortification known as the Tower of War.

1. Entry Hall: Anyone seeking to enter the Tower of War and the dungeon beneath it are invited to this room to negotiate terms. Some prefer to pay a flat entrance fee, while others agree to give 33% of the treasure they find to the guild. Truly adventurous explorers take their chances with a game that Stillguar calls "The Great Risk," which can reduce their rate of payment to as low as nothing or increase it to as much as 95% of recovered wealth. The hall has a large table, chairs, a warm fireplace, and plenty of ale to help with the negotiations.

2. Supply Pantry: This tight chamber is lined with shelves that hold mundane supplies for the guild, such as food, water, ale, and many goods and services found in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook*. Guild members can requisition items but must replace anything that is lost or damaged. Others can purchase this gear at twice the listed cost.

3. Stillguar's Chamber: This room is the office of Stillguar (LN male dwarf cleric 9/fighter 6). It contains a table stacked with ledgers and a trapped chest containing the guild's reported earnings. The amount in the chest matches the ledgers exactly, but the guild actually takes in far more that is never reported to the local tax collector. Underneath the chest is a secret trapdoor that leads down to Stillguar's personal vault. This chamber contains all his secrets, including the additional wealth and the odd relics he collects from the dungeon.

4. Members' Rooms: While these chambers are not assigned to any particular guild members, two or three rooms are occupied at all times by members who are recovering from a recent dungeon expedition or preparing for a new one. Each room contains a bed, a table, a chest, and a wardrobe. Stillguar hands out the keys and keeps spares in case of emergency.

5. Lieutenants' Chambers: These two identical chambers are occupied by Dorogond and Arthton, Stillguar's most trusted lieutenants. They help run the business of the guild and oversee new recruits. Dorogond (N male dwarf fighter 7/rogue 3) commands the Enforcer's Hand and is often found with members of that group. Arthton (LN male dwarf cleric 8) works with members of the Finder's Hand.

6. Members' Hall: This large chamber has a number of tables placed around a podium for guild meetings and members-only feasts. A few members are present at any given time, relaxing, planning, or honing their skills with the many practice traps and locks along the far wall.

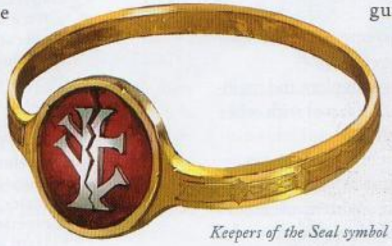
KEEPERS OF THE SEAL

Symbol: The Keepers of the Seal, not surprisingly, use a cracked silver seal inscribed with a single rune as their symbol. Members of the guild are given a signet ring bearing this symbol.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: More than a hundred years ago, a band of adventurers raided the dungeon of a powerful lich and accidentally released the fiend on the surrounding countryside. By the time the undead menace had been sealed in its tomb once again, hundreds were dead, including every member of a local temple dedicated to Heironeous—except one. Young Thalkin Talymir survived because he had been sent to a nearby city to deliver a message about the impending threat. Soon after, Thalkin founded the Keepers of the Seal, a group dedicated to ensuring that the dangers buried in deadly dungeons remain contained. Thalkin has long since passed on, but his followers carry on his noble work.

Members of the Keepers of the Seal watch known threats and research new sites that might deserve their attention. When terrors manage to break free, guild members are the first to move in to rectify the situation. They also wipe out ordinary monsters that live in dungeons where greater threats are bound before those creatures unwittingly or intentionally unleash the stronger evil on the world.

Some Keepers argue for a more active approach to dealing with imprisoned monsters. They believe that captive creatures should be released and then permanently destroyed to eliminate the risk that the beasts will one day escape. While members frequently debate this idea, the leaders of the guild have so far preferred to stick to Thalkin's original vision.



Keepers of the Seal symbol

Type: Temple.

Scale: 9 (regional/barony).

Affiliation Score Criteria: Because the guild was founded on the tenets of Heironeous, many members hail from that church, though such faith is not a requirement. Prospective members are not told of their candidacy. Instead, they are watched secretly as they undertake certain challenges, and invited to join the Keepers only upon the successful completion of their tasks. Members cannot be of an evil alignment.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Successfully complete all initiation rites	+1
Have levels of cleric or paladin	+1
Can cast *banishment, dispel evil, imprisonment,* or *temporal stasis*	+2
Successfully maintain a failing seal	+2
Retrieve an *iron flask* or *mirror of life trapping* for the Keepers	+4
Release a bound creature or spirit	–10

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated.
4–10	**Vigilant One**: Recognized as a member of the guild, you are expected to assist in times of need.
11–16	**Seal Watcher**: Stay at any guildhall at no cost; buy spellcasting services from the guild for 3/4 the normal price.
17–23	**Seal Guardian**: Gain +2 circumstance bonus on saves against the spells and special abilities of outsiders and undead.
24–29	**Seal Forger**: Once per day, invoke the aura of the seal, granting you spell resistance (10 + your level), immunity to fear effects, and a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls. The aura lasts for 10 minutes and is treated as a 5th-level spell.
30 or higher	**Seal Keeper**: You bear a Reliquary of the Keeper, a small golden coffin containing one of the bones of founder Thalkin Talymir. Once per day, call upon this bone to heal yourself or an ally of 30 points of damage; or to gain a +4 insight bonus on an attack roll, a save, or a skill check.

Executive Powers: Crusade, gift, research.

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Members of the Keepers of the Seal are required to spend the majority of their time attending to guild duties. Due to the small number of guild members, they must work with nonmembers who share their ideals. Advancing in the guild is difficult, and when a member attains a new rank, he travels to one of the guild's headquarters for a special ceremony in which he receives a new signet ring. The silver seal on the new ring has fewer cracks than the previous ring's seal. Guild leaders wear rings whose seals have no cracks at all.

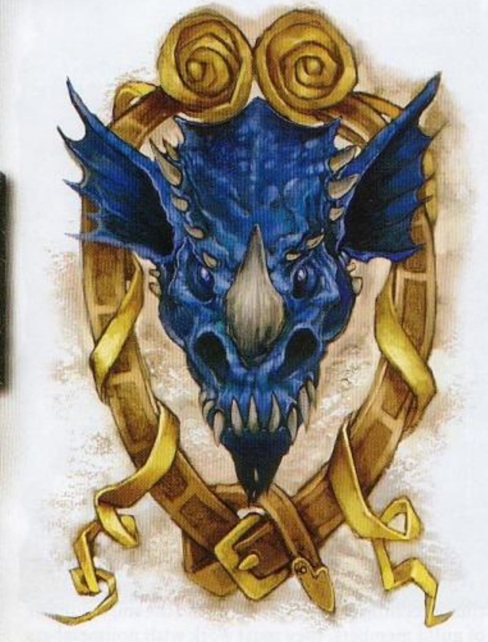
HEADHUNTERS

Symbol: The Headhunters' symbol is a crest bearing the head of a blue dragon. Members of the guild work the color blue into their gear and dye their weapons to match.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: For some thrill-seekers, hunting monsters and looting dungeons is a sport. Banding together to share resources and exploits, guild members seek to increase their personal wealth and prestige through daring raids into subterranean halls.

Chapters of the Headhunters are found in many cities, but once per year, all the groups gather at one guildhall to compare trophies, boast about their successes, and plan future ventures. This gathering culminates in one member receiving the title of Crownhunter, a position of respect and glory. The honor is awarded to the member

Illus. by J. Hodgson



Headhunters symbol

Illus. by J. Hodgson

who completed the most daring, most impressive, or most numerous adventures over the past year.

Constantly searching for dungeons to explore and roaming monsters to slay, Headhunters often travel with other groups of adventurers and guild members.

Type: Fighting company.

Scale: 11 (multiregional/duchy).

Affiliation Score Criteria: Prospective members must pay an entry fee of 500 gp and donate a trophy—the head of a monster that has a Challenge Rating of 4 or higher—to the local chapter headquarters. This trophy represents the member and is accompanied by the member's official list of deeds. Once per month, the member can replace the trophy with the head of another monster that has a CR equal to or higher than that of the previous monster. For the purposes of the guild, a monster is a creature of any type other than humanoid, animal, vermin, or plant.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Base attack bonus +10 or higher	+1
Has a magic weapon worth 30,000 gp or more	+1
Has a magic item worth 50,000 gp or more	+2
Defeats a monster of CR 9 or higher	+1
Defeats a monster of CR 15 or higher*	+2
Declared Crownhunter for the year	+4
Successfully plunders an assigned dungeon	+1 (–4 if you fail)
Fails to defeat one monster of CR 7 or higher per month	–1

* The bonus gained from meeting this criterion overlaps (does not stack with) the bonus gained from defeating a monster of CR 9 or higher.

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Aside from the annual meeting, members of the Headhunters have few set responsibilities, but those who remain idle lose their status quickly. New titles are conferred upon members every other month during a meeting at the local guildhall. To reach the rank of Gem Hunter, you must collect heads from three different monsters that have a Challenge Rating of 6 or higher. To reach the rank of Headhunter, you must defeat a monster that has a CR of 16 or higher.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	Not affiliated.
4–12	**Coin Hunter:** Recognized as a member of the guild, you are invited to the annual convocation.
13–21	**Gem Hunter:** Gain a +2 competence bonus on Survival checks when following monster tracks. You are assigned a personal assistant who accompanies you (though not into danger) to record your successes.
22–29	**Claw Hunter:** Your competence bonus on Survival checks when following monster tracks increases to +4. Gain a +2 competence bonus on Knowledge checks to learn about a creature's abilities and weaknesses.
30 or higher	**Headhunter:** Your competence bonus on Knowledge checks to learn about a creature's abilities and weaknesses increases to +4. You can borrow up to four magic items (total value of 30,000 gp or less) from other members. If an item is destroyed or lost, your affiliation score drops by 1, and you must pay for the item.

Executive Powers: Crusade, gift, research.

DUNGEON DESIGN

CHAPTER FOUR

Illus. by R. Horsley

A dungeon is the ultimate gaming playground. If you want to try something, no matter how crazy or improbable, you can get away with it in a dungeon. But too many DMs sell their dungeons short by needlessly sticking to perceived standards of realism. Others build scattershot collections of rooms that fail to come together into a cohesive whole. And almost every veteran gamer has a horror story about an excruciatingly dull dungeon adventure.

This chapter provides advice, ideas, and guidelines to help you build great dungeons. It is not necessarily about building "better" dungeons, because every DM has different needs. The dungeons you build depend on your campaign world, the stories you want to tell, the games you like to run, and so on. The following concepts and information provide the framework for creating interesting dungeons. Add your own experience and creativity to expand your dungeon-building horizons.

This chapter assumes that you are familiar with the basics of dungeon design, such as choosing monsters, drawing maps, and creating the mundane portions of your dungeon. If you have little experience in those areas, Chapter 3: Adventures in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* has all the information you need. Start with the fundamentals in that book, and then return to this chapter to take your dungeons to the next level.

ADVANTAGES OF DUNGEONS

Any discussion of building dungeons starts with considering how they function in play. A dungeon is essentially a maze that the PCs navigate. Along the way, they encounter monsters and strange locations. Sometimes the maze is simple: Room A leads to room B, which leads to room C. Other times, the adventurers have a multitude of choices in navigating the dungeon.

For most DMs, dungeons are a convenient setting for quests. The characters enter their corridors in search of a specific item or in pursuit of a villain. The dungeon is one big obstacle between the PCs and their goal. Although this function makes sense, it doesn't take full advantage of the dungeon experience. Dungeons have a few traits that make them different from other game environments. By playing to the strengths of these traits, you can build more interesting and effective dungeons, or realize when a different setting might be a better fit.

Players more readily accept the presence of strange, unexplained phenomena and contraptions in a dungeon. Furthermore, they usually don't bat an eye at a wide variety of creatures with no logical relationship—after all, dungeons are where monsters live. In addition to these two primary features, dungeons are also enclosed systems that enhance the sense of danger and discovery so important to adventure.

OTHERWORLDLY

This trait is a dungeon's most important strength. Players expect dungeons to be strange environments where the rules no longer apply. Anything might exist there. An ordinary locale is unlikely to have a river of blood flowing through city slums, or dozens of magical energy geysers. In contrast, a dungeon might feature a wall of talking skulls next to a chamber that holds a small tornado, just down the hall from a gory temple of Erythnul with an altar constructed from the still-living remains of the god's foes. Both the eerie and wondrous are common in dungeons; using strange terrain such as that described in Chapter 1 intensifies this sense of otherworldliness. A dungeon might not even exist on the Material Plane, but be a strange way station between the worlds, a fortress on the Astral Plane, or a pocket dimension with its own rules. It could even be a sentient being with its own motives.

MONSTERS GALORE

Dungeons are monster housing developments, containing orcs, trolls, demons, giants, and undead in relatively close proximity. No other setting allows so many different monsters in so limited a space. Goblins might dwell near the dungeon's entrance, and wights lurk in a forgotten tomb in a hidden corner of the upper levels, while carrion crawlers and monstrous vermin infest the halls. Deeper down, fiends or lich lords might hold sway over their own kingdoms or passages to mysterious realms. Narrow corridors, cave-ins, walls, traps, and magical effects separate the various creatures and keep them from killing each other off (although conflicts between different groups living within can make for exciting adventure too).

ENEMY TERRITORY

Civilization ends at the dungeon's entrance, isolating the inhabitants and allowing them to do as they wish. The dungeon dwellers can set up traps, ambushes, and other elaborate ruses because they control the territory. On their home turf, they have a tactical advantage against intruding adventurers. Other "dungeon" locations can offer the same advantages as the classic underground catacomb. A gnarled forest tangle, a warren of alleys and hideouts in a rough part of a city, or an evil duke's fortified castle all fit the bill.

LAWLESSNESS

Dungeons exist as isolated systems, outside of society's laws. There, murder, robbery, and other crimes are common, and outcasts hide within or defend themselves against capture. A renegade necromancer can turn a dungeon level into her personal fortress, complete with undead guardians. An evil cult might use a hidden dungeon chamber as its temple. However, because they are self-contained, dungeons can exist relatively close to civilization—even literally underfoot—and can host bizarre and spectacular events that go unnoticed by all but the few who dare enter the depths. Lawless areas certainly exist in wild, distant lands, but the dungeon can be practically at the city's doorstep. And although the law might avoid the worst parts of town, the residents of such places still must keep a low profile to avoid a brutal "cleanup." Dungeon dwellers might never attract attention, depending on their ultimate purposes, until something draws the PCs to their doorstep.

THREE MYTHS OF DUNGEON DESIGN

Many misconceptions about dungeons persist among players and DMs alike. Here are three of the most damaging myths.

One Sheet, One Level: Many DMs try to fit each dungeon level on a single sheet of graph paper. Assuming that a square represents 5 feet, one sheet of graph paper has enough space for five or six good combat encounters. D&D battles work best when the monsters have plenty of room to move around, especially if they are Large or Huge creatures. The creatures can attack from more than one direction, and the PCs likewise have more options for maneuvering.

Hack and Slash: Many players assume that if something lives in a dungeon, the PCs can kill it without worry. Instead, why not build a dungeon in which the characters meet lively NPCs, negotiate with monsters, or get drawn into interesting plots? Try thinking of your dungeon as an underground city. An area controlled by orcs is like a bad neighborhood—a dangerous place unless you know how to keep the locals happy. A visit to the lair of a scheming goblin king is like a trip to a guildmaster's hall—watch your words, or you might find yourself trapped in a one-sided deal. Dusty, undead-infested passages are like sewers—filled with vile monsters, but also convenient hiding places for those who wish to avoid attention. Add in good-aligned subterranean creatures such as dwarves or gnomes, and you have a setting ripe for intrigue, roleplaying, and storytelling.

Overdetailed Ecology: Will the players really notice that the dungeon technically does not have enough food to support the fiendish chimera that lives there? Probably not; they will be too busy dodging its fiery breath. Realism is useful for keeping the game recognizable and logical, but taking it to an extreme risks shutting out creative, interesting ideas.

Illus. by C. Frank

Dungeons are filled with the extraordinary—and the deadly

FUNCTIONS OF DUNGEONS

Before you set pencil to paper, you need to decide how the dungeon fits into your campaign setting. Take a moment to consider why the dungeon exists, how it interacts with the rest of the world, and what purpose it (and other dungeons) serve in the grand scheme of things. You could just say that dungeons are the ruins of a forgotten civilization, but many other interesting possibilities exist.

A conceit of most dungeons is that these havens of monsters and sources of evil exist underground. But why? How you answer this question determines the flavor of your campaign and inspires interesting quirks in your dungeons. The traditional take on this subject is that monsters hate sunlight, or that good-aligned races long ago drove the evil ones deep into the earth. These explanations work fine for many games, but they also push the issue into the campaign world's distant past. A different twist can make dungeons more interesting and relevant to ongoing events, providing fodder for world building.

This section presents some roles that dungeons can play in your campaign. Choosing one option for a particular dungeon does not preclude the use of others elsewhere, or combining several into a unique entity. You need not choose any of these ideas, but they might serve as a springboard for your own imaginative concepts.

DEATH TRAP

The death trap dungeon is a staple of the hobby. Traps, magical conundrums, and powerful guardians protect treasures and secrets hidden ages ago. Some of the most popular dungeons of all time (such as the Tomb of Horrors) are essentially a series of dangerous traps and puzzles to overcome. Only those adventurers who are clever and lucky enough can survive to earn the final reward.

The first step in creating a death trap dungeon is to determine who built the place, what treasures it holds, and why those items need to be protected. While you're thinking about this, consider who or what else might be in the dungeon, and what their purposes are. For example, a royal tomb might hold the wealth of a kingdom, buried with its long-dead monarch to serve him in the afterlife, and many deadly protections against tomb robbers. Such a treasure will likely attract many explorers, both humanoid and monstrous. Constructs and undead guardians might have been sealed in the dungeon to watch eternally, but other sorts of creatures come and go in different areas. While a party of adventurers explores the dark halls, a mind flayer and its entourage also roam the corridors, both groups in search of a rumored artifact. At the same time, a gang of derro tunnels down through stone and earth, hoping to bypass the deadly traps and get to the treasure before anyone else. All the while, the original patron still dwells within, a horror eternally brooding in its central vault.

Though the idea might seem odd at first, a death trap dungeon can be a great place for interesting roleplaying encounters. All who enter are invaders and must face the same threats and dangers. Traps might be fiendishly complex puzzles, requiring several simultaneous steps to solve and bypass. In the above example, perhaps the mind flayer has found a number of clues but needs one more piece of information for the solution—something discovered by the PCs. Conflict could ensue, but if the two groups seek different things, a temporary alliance is also possible. The derro could inadvertently unleash a deadly guardian that rampages through previously cleared areas, forcing natural enemies to cooperate at least for a while against a common threat. Even if the PCs refuse to work with evil creatures, they might have to team up with rival explorers to defeat the dungeon's challenges.

Encounter traps (see page 120) are perfect for death trap dungeons because they can act continuously without threatening inhabitants (who are few and have been preplaced). See Chapter 6 for more about creating cruel and deadly traps for a dungeon of this sort.

THE NEAR FRONTIER

Humanoid kingdoms tend to spread ever wider. Civilized beings, such as elves, gnomes, dwarves, and halflings, push back the wilderness, above the surface and below. Wild and brutal creatures, such as giants and orcs, retreat into the border areas, where they are little threat to average citizens. The wild frontier is many miles away, where only bold adventurers (or, some would say, the mad) dare travel.

Yet just beneath the feet of the grandest civilization, terrifying creatures stalk long-forgotten caverns and ruins that lie even deeper than dwarf mines have penetrated. Though the surface is mostly tamed, the world below is still largely unknown and full of danger. Perhaps the subterranean frontier is opened up by an earthquake or an overzealous mining project. Explorers can venture into these hidden ways, so close to home, just as they would explore distant mountains and dark forests.

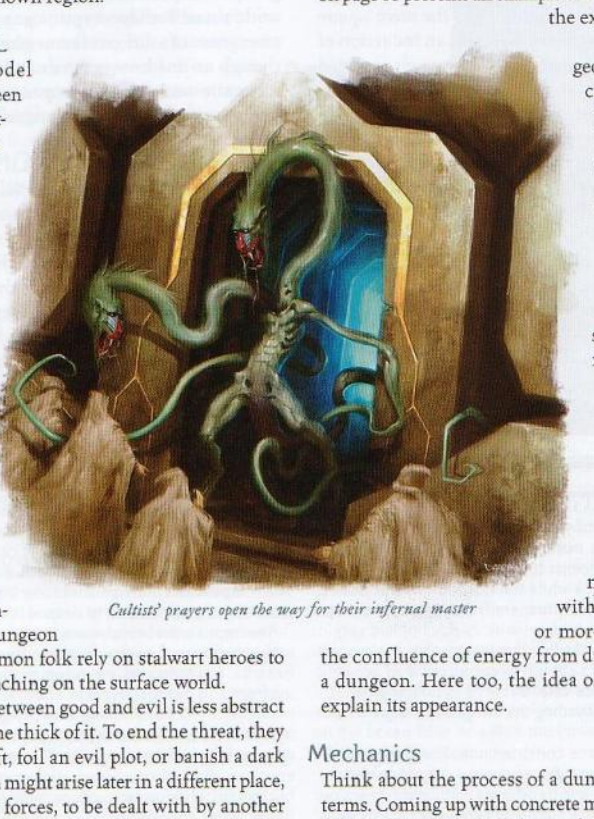
This approach treats dungeons much like the outdoor wilderness areas of your campaign world. A dungeon might be an immense complex of caverns, lakes, and tunnels covering many square miles, and it could take days, weeks, or months to traverse. Dwarf and gnome enclaves might spring up, outposts in the new frontier for mining gold, gems, and other valuables. Monstrous inhabitants are a constant threat, and employment opportunities abound for driving them farther into the depths.

When the PCs travel in such a dungeon, they might walk for miles through abandoned tunnels and empty caves without encountering anything, just like an overland journey through uncivilized areas. Traditional dungeons, which feature narrow passages and closely connected rooms filled with monsters and traps, correspond to keyed adventure sites, towns, or other critical locations in the wilderness. The characters might see unusual sights, such as a jet of fiery lava on the other side of a wide cavern, or a pile of bodies from a recent battle between orcs and drow, but the campaign focuses on a few interesting locations rather than a complex, interconnected structure.

Such a wilderness need not be restricted to the traditional underground locale of a dungeon. Perhaps a portal to another plane opens near or even within a city, as the result of cultists' summoning rituals or a tear within the fabric of the multiverse. The "dungeon" might even be wilderness terrain, with twisted ways and nodes of activity, such as a weird forest that has encroached on the PCs' home; an even more unusual situation would have them inhabit a floating city that has been blown by storm winds into a previously unknown region.

AGENT OF EVIL

This campaign model makes the divide between good and evil more literal. The world is like an apple with a rotten core: Its center is a physical embodiment of evil, riddled with portals to the Infernal Planes and other horrid places. Fiends and their servants spill forth from the depths to taint and conquer the sunlit surface, while the champions of good work to prevent the spread of corruption. Mass warfare is nearly impossible in narrow dungeon corridors, so the common folk rely on stalwart heroes to keep evil from encroaching on the surface world.



Cultists' prayers open the way for their infernal master

Illus. by Daarken

The cosmic battle between good and evil is less abstract when the PCs are in the thick of it. To end the threat, they must seal a cosmic rift, foil an evil plot, or banish a dark god. Another dungeon might arise later in a different place, a product of the same forces, to be dealt with by another set of heroes or by the PCs once again.

Thus, the party ventures into the dungeon to drive back incursions of evil, uncover the link between the dungeon and the world's core, and sunder this link. Gold and other treasure are useful rewards, but the characters' true goal is to prevent more demons, devils, and other horrors from reaching the surface. To accomplish this task, they must fight their way to the dungeon's lowest level and seal the passages that lead to the rotten heart of the world, perhaps with a special ritual or item.

Such a cosmology provides a convenient explanation for the weird traps, strange magic, and bizarre monsters that are found in dungeons. It also explains why the challenges become increasingly difficult and gruesome as adventurers progress to deeper levels.

Origin

How did this situation come to pass? You decide on the dungeon's backstory, using elements to tie together the creatures found within and the creation myths of your campaign. Below are a couple of suggestions. The sidebar on page 68 presents an example of a detailed origin story for the existence of dungeons.

Infernal Will: A dungeon might grow from the center of the world by the will of a specific evil being, perhaps an ancient deity that was cast out from reality, such as Tharizdun or Moander. The mass will of evil subterranean races such as drow, derro, or kuo-toa might also spawn dungeons. A planar force could have a will of its own, such as the sentient Abyss described in *Hordes of the Abyss*, that generates dungeons to further its desires.

Temporary Portal: A portal to the infernal realms opens deep within the world, near one or more elemental gates, and the confluence of energy from different planes spawns a dungeon. Here too, the idea of a sentient Abyss can explain its appearance.

Mechanics

Think about the process of a dungeon's growth in game terms. Coming up with concrete mechanics helps give the dungeon a sense of solidity and directs the PCs in their quest to overcome it.

Essentially, an evil force at the center of the world generates malevolent power, and its servants harness and focus this power. For example, on the lowest level of a dungeon, an infernal machine might channel mystic energy upward, like a heart pumping blood, through all the levels. By smashing the machine (which likely has powerful guardians or attendants), the PCs cause the foul energy to seep back into the world's core.

Before they can reach the machine and its infernal keepers, the PCs might need to destroy shrines and other sites on upper dungeon levels to weaken the energy that drives its growth. For example, dark energy creates a magical barrier that prevents the party from descending lower than the fourth level, but the destruction of shrines on the second and third levels weakens the magical support enough to collapse the barrier.

Storytelling

This campaign model allows for a multitude of scenarios. Perhaps a small town in a prosperous kingdom suddenly falls silent. The PCs investigate and find no trace of the entire population. A foul pit growing in the town square reveals the inhabitants' fate and heralds an incursion of evil. The characters must venture into the newly spawned dungeon, defeat the servant of evil that provides it with energy, and seal the rift before the nascent dungeon becomes a portal for something truly horrific.

Other scenarios that play off this concept can allow opportunities for roleplaying and investigation. For example, an isolated monastery slowly shifts from good to evil because a dungeon has begun to form beneath its foundations. Imps and other minor creatures of evil corrupt the abbot, driving him to build a shrine that hastens the expansion of the dungeon. The PCs visit the monastery to investigate the murder of a monk who learned the abbot's secret and become involved in the greater plot. They must question the monks, outwit the evil abbot, and find and destroy the shrine to stop the birth of the dungeon. In this scenario, the PCs might never enter the dungeon at all.

A massive threat that imperils the entire world has other implications for a campaign. Perhaps the deities of good and evil join forces to stave off the corruption spreading up from the core. As a result, the PCs must work with those who had been deadly enemies just a week earlier; a paladin of Heironeous might have to ally with a champion of Hextor he had earlier stopped from seizing the kingdom's throne. The races of the surface world are likely to band together in some manner against the danger from below, regardless of historical enmity.

When a dungeon spawns, dozens of adventuring parties might be sent through its gates, in the hopes that one group at least can survive to find and sever its link to the world's core. Perhaps cryptic signs point to the imminent emergence of a dungeon somewhere in a vast wilderness, though no one knows the exact location. Many groups scour the area to find the opening, but the PCs are the first to set foot in the new dungeon's halls.

LEGENDARY LOCATION

Legendary dungeons such as White Plume Mountain and the Tomb of Horrors have become part of D&D lore. Players whose characters conquer such famed challenges have every right to brag about their accomplishment. By the same token, the famous dungeons in your campaign world should be tied to legends and important historical events.

For example, the dwarf citadel Spirepeak, lost ages ago to a horde of rampaging demons, still contains a multitude of treasures. Chief among them is the *scepter of the dwarf*

A SAMPLE DUNGEON ORIGIN

Long ago, the pantheon of young deities tried to drown an ancient evil in an endless ocean, but the forces of darkness raised mountains and continents to save themselves. Eventually, life appeared on the surface while the cosmic evil was sealed beneath. As humanoid races prospered, they became the appointed guardians of the world.

Deities of good and evil alike fear the unknowable, malevolent beings trapped in the world's core. They command their servants not only to keep the surface safe, but also to take the fight to the source of darkness by invading the dungeons that penetrate deep into the earth.

But these are no mundane constructions. The trapped entities constantly attempt to escape, spawning dungeons as their mystic power shifts, twists, and transforms earth and stone. Corridors, chambers, and bizarre elements spread like spiderwebs outward from the world's core. Nearer the terrible core, the fell power is more intense, so the deepest levels of dungeons are especially ghastly. The mingling of unnatural energy and the material world produces unnatural results—passages choked with human bones, walls that pulse like living flesh, rivers of blood and bile, and shrines to dark, mysterious gods spontaneously bursting from the rock.

The dark power seeps upward, infusing these weird regions with ever greater corruption. Eventually, when a dungeon is infused with enough dark energy, it can open a conduit to the surface, releasing the ancient entities and triggering apocalypse. The unspeakable horrors that have been trapped for so long would once again be free to despoil the cosmos.

The imprisoned beings want to stop mortals from interfering with this process, so their energy also creates lethal traps and hazards. Evil creatures are drawn to these terrible sites, march up from the depths, or form spontaneously to protect their masters' interests. The mightiest servants of evil can survive only in the areas most infused with the malignant energy—the deepest layers of the dungeons. Those depths are filled with aberrations that only madness could conceive, fiends, animated horrors, or physical projections of the ancients' dreams. The upper levels usually host less powerful minions of evil, such as orcs, goblins, and other relatively weak creatures that were attracted to the area.

On the surface, some mortals actually work to hasten the day when the ancient evil will break free. Driven by madness or the lust for power, these cultists curry favor and hope to be rewarded when the apocalypse finally arrives. They build shrines to attract, channel, and augment the energy that forms dungeons.

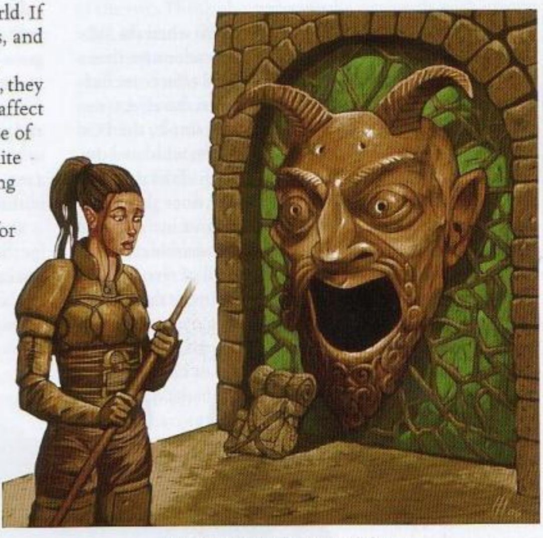
kings, an artifact that could unite the dwarves under a single monarch to take back their ancestral holdings. Many explorers have ventured into Spirepeak's halls, but no one has ever come back. As the PCs prepare to brave the citadel, they hear tales from townsfolk or read about it in musty tomes.

In this campaign model, the PCs do more than simply explore dungeons. They set foot on ground from which none has returned to tell the tale. They see sights and battle monsters that no one else has encountered. Your campaign takes on an epic feel when the players realize that their characters are contributing to the history of the world. If the PCs survive the dungeon, recover its treasures, and slay its horrors, their names become part of legend.

Legendary dungeons are useful in two ways. First, they allow the history of the campaign world to directly affect game play. It is one thing to tell the PCs that a race of half-demon giants once ruled the world. It is quite another for them to come face to face the few remaining members of that race, hidden in their last fortress.

Second, legends can foreshadow events planned for the current campaign. If the PCs hear rumors about a sacred forge hidden deep within Spirepeak, they feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment when they later find a forge that matches the legend's description—especially if the tale wrongly stated that it had been destroyed by demons. Perhaps the legend further says that only a sword crafted on the forge can slay the demon king Herazathal. Now the PCs face an interesting problem. They must defend the forge while someone—perhaps Spirepeak's last surviving high priest of Moradin—creates the blade. Meanwhile, the halls that surround the forge teem with demons and other monsters. While the PCs keep the forge safe, they dare not risk drawing attention to themselves, lest the entire dungeon descend upon them.

A legendary location has good reason to remain a legend, rather than a thoroughly looted and mapped dungeon. Perhaps it is high in the mountains, far from well-traveled paths, in territory claimed by mighty creatures such as frost giants or dragons. Or its precise location is unknown, so the dungeon remains undisturbed for centuries. All kinds of troublesome environments, such as



It's always a good idea to check first

Illus. by W. Mahy

TEN TRAITS OF LEGENDARY DUNGEONS

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about the origin of or explanation for a legendary location in your campaign.

1. Last of its Kind: An ancient, powerful monster (or group of like monsters) within the dungeon is unknown anywhere else. This creature ferociously defends its last stronghold.

2. No Survivors: The dungeon is legendary because no one has ever survived its dangers, such as the Tomb of Horrors.

3. Artifacts: Legendary dungeons are often the final resting places or guardians of powerful artifacts, relics, and other magic items. Such dungeons are usually death traps as well.

4. Mighty Creatures: A legendary dungeon could be the prison of a spectacular entity, the tomb of a forgotten deity, still infused with the god's fading power, or a lava pit in which the gods submerged and bound the embodiment of elemental destruction.

5. Lost Civilizations: Part of the dungeon, or perhaps a massive cavern connected to it, holds a small, undiscovered city. To this lost civilization, the PCs are alien visitors.

6. Legendary Figure: Such wondrous locations are tied to important figures in their respective campaign worlds, such as the hidden tower of Raistlin Majere, the tomb of Vecna, or the secret resting place of the tarrasque.

7. Major Threat: Legendary dungeons are inhabited and ruled by dangerous creatures. The upper levels might include the expected dungeon dwellers, but the depths are home to a truly mighty being, such as an advanced balor aiming to become a demon lord, or a great wyrm dragon that considers the entire dungeon to be its personal hoard.

8. Unique: A legendary dungeon incorporates or embodies something that sets it apart from others. Perhaps it is located on the ocean floor or within the bowels of an active volcano, is sentient, or is mobile.

9. Weird Magic: A legendary dungeon is more than a simple tumble of ruined passages. Strange magical effects, planar overlap, and other uncanny phenomena are common; the dungeon's very existence might magically warp its surroundings.

10. World-Shattering Danger: The location contains or is the result of some terrible danger that, if unleashed, could destroy existence. Perhaps an extraplanar horror is sealed by the dungeon's construction, but its magical prison is weakening. The PCs must restore the seals before it can escape into the multiverse.

thick jungles, vast, blasted deserts, the ocean's depths, or even extraplanar sites, can make just traveling to such a dungeon an intense challenge.

Alternatively, a magical effect or curse could keep a dungeon hidden. Maybe the only portal that leads to a dungeon on the Outer Planes opens just once every 100 years, while the plane's slowed time flow allows the dungeon's denizens to survive for centuries. Other extraplanar locations might be accessible only from dangerous places such as Acheron or the Abyss. Perhaps the dungeon vanishes and reappears at random places and times, so that its sudden arrival spawns tales that draw adventurers.

A legendary dungeon really comes to life when the PCs first hear stories of its dangers and later encounter those threats firsthand. Good use of background effects, including smells and sounds, can really heighten the effect (see Chapter 7 for more ideas on this). For example, the PCs might hear from a shopkeeper that a sudden wind and the smell of roasting flesh herald the approach of the dreaded guardian of Lord Creaghan's Tomb. Later, once they have entered the dungeon, describing a rush of air and the odor of burnt flesh alerts the PCs that the terrible creature approaches. Nothing can match the thrill of recognition when the PCs suddenly realize that the rumors they heard correspond to their immediate situation.

Give the players enough information to bring the dungeon to life in their imaginations, but not so much that you overwhelm them. Consider using flashbacks to apply campaign-related information to the current situation. You can halt the game briefly to describe how one of the PCs heard a rumor in a tavern, or to replay a quick scene of her mentor warning her about a particularly dangerous area of the dungeon. This method is an effective way to prepare the PCs for a coming encounter, heightening anticipation but not revealing too much.

THE BIZARRE

In a bizarre dungeon, anything can happen. Gravity reverses in some areas, causing things to fall upward. Architectural features are forged from unusual or magical substances. Energy arcs between dungeon walls as a planar portal floods the area with magical potential. Living webs grow back minutes after being hacked away. These highly magical traits are impossible in the real world, but the dungeon exists outside the mundane; here, weird monsters and powerful magic mingle. The players might not be able to accept a perfectly frictionless surface in the middle of a major city, but such a barrier can show up in a dungeon without destroying the suspension of disbelief.

The concept of a bizarre dungeon is simple—don't settle for the ordinary. This advice is not a call to throw out realism completely; for example, don't place a gigantic monster in a cramped room whose door it could never squeeze through. Nor does this concept grant you license to deprive monsters of sources of

Some dungeons spontaneously generate bizarre threats

Illus. by C. Frank

food, water, air, and other necessities. But a dungeon is a perfect place to inject the strange, the weird, and the unexpected into an adventure. As the DM, you are like a movie director with an unlimited special effects budget. Why settle for mundane furnishings, such as bunks and tables, when you can have pillars of lava supporting stone platforms? Spring for a vertical chamber created by beholders, or a hall that can be crossed only by leaping between chains that hang from the ceiling. The PCs can find ordinary battlefield remnants anywhere. Instead, have them come across a bearded devil, writhing in agony, pinned to a wall by a cold iron trident and cursed to live out the final, horrific moment of its existence for centuries. The devil might be willing to give the characters a useful clue if they end its life or remove the trident. Such oddness can exist only in a dungeon.

Embracing this concept requires you to rethink some assumptions about dungeon design. Many DMs start by imagining how a dungeon grows and develops in "real life." The bizarre approach adds an additional step. Each time you add an element to a dungeon, even if it's just a new room, consider a way to infuse it with something unexpected and wondrous. Set aside your desire to explain everything as a realistic, logical system. What would be cool? Once you come up with an idea, you can easily justify its existence, whether by magic, planar energy, ancient experiments, and so forth.

Getting Weird

Embracing the bizarre in your dungeons involves becoming a cultural omnivore. When you watch a movie, make a mental note of any fantastic, interesting, or weird scenes, set pieces, or special effects. Do the same when reading comics, novels, and manga. Anime in particular is a great source of imaginative visuals—its producers long ago accepted animation as a tool to let their imaginations run wild.

For the next step, think about some of the mundane features that might appear in your dungeon. Then crack open your *Monster Manuals*, environment supplements such as *Frostburn* or *Stormwrack*, and other creature tomes such as *Fiendish Codex I*, *Fiendish Codex II*, or *Lords of Madness*, and look for interesting ways to inject a monstrous element. For example, a dungeon chamber is likely to have bones strewn across its floor, given the number of battles that take place there. But rather than settle for boring old remains, furnish the chamber with the withered husk of a purple worm, the still-quivering flesh of a destroyed undead creature, or a weirder element along the lines of the pinned devil described earlier.

Bizarre elements are even more interesting if you can work them into strange encounters. Unusual events can set up a combat encounter, a trap, or a nasty combination of the two. Think about the result you want (the PCs fight a big skeleton in this chamber), and then come up with a lead-up to that result that evokes a sense of wonder (a skeleton forms itself from the bones on the floor). You can achieve this effect by having the bones on the floor be those of a slain demon; if the PCs enter and touch the opposite door, the bones assemble into a Huge skeleton that attacks the party.

Starting with an ordinary effect and dressing it in the fantastic is also a powerful tool. For example, shallow pools of water dot the dungeon floor. They seem normal at first, but a PC who takes a closer look sees a swarm of eyeballs floating in the puddle. The eyes flit about and look back at him. In fact, a powerful mind flayer in the dungeon uses its telepathy to communicate with the strange eye creatures and to spy on intruders. This effect could also be accomplished with a series of mundane peep holes and secret passages, but the fantastic "eyeball stew" is more disturbing and more interesting.

None of this is to say that realism is boring or unnecessary. But a judicious seasoning of the unreal can make more earthly surroundings that much more flavorful.

MAKING DUNGEONS

After deciding how dungeons fit into your campaign world, the actual creation can begin. In addition to a general theme, you should come up with ways to make the dungeon interesting. Anyone can draw a simple maze full of monsters, but for your players, an inventive dungeon makes the game more challenging—and you will have more fun

RULES AND THE BIZARRE

In D&D, the rules let the DM and the players know what can happen, how things work, and what to expect. Don't let a tendency to define everything spoil the concept of a bizarre campaign. You don't need rules or templates to create the lurking eyeballs or the self-assembling skeleton described above. Nor do you have to work out the exact costs and prerequisites for creating bizarre terrain. You simply want to evoke a sense of strangeness.

However, rules make the game fair. Don't force the PCs to spend a round doing nothing while the skeleton pulls itself together, or waste a round of their spells' duration. More important, the skeleton should not behave in a way that is contrary to the game rules; it should still be vulnerable to bludgeoning weapons, for example. You need rules to describe the action. Just as a player cannot simply say, "I decapitate the frost giant," you should not arbitrarily dictate the results of events or actions.

Anything that could directly change a number on a character sheet or that affects the PCs' actions should be supported by game rules. Otherwise, anything goes. The rules should be a tool, never a roadblock. If you believe that an element needs rules to back it up, find the closest analog in the game and extrapolate from there.

throwing its challenges against their characters. What makes your dungeon especially intriguing, and how does that trait fit into the bigger picture of your campaign?

"Show, don't tell" is an important piece of writing advice that applies just as well to running a D&D game. Evocative description reveals important details more effectively than dry narration. For example, if a king is sad about the death of his son, you could simply tell the players that he is sad. But if instead, you describe how he is dressed in dark clothing, how his eyes are red from weeping, and how he talks in halting, dull tones, the players recognize for themselves that the king is in mourning.

By the same token, a good dungeon is an evocative, interesting place. The elements that make it unique have a tangible effect on game play. In a searing desert tomb, the characters must cope with high temperatures that slowly wear them down. Fire creatures lurk around every corner. A trap buries unwary PCs in sand, forcing them to dig their way out as a swarm of scorpions closes in.

DYNAMIC DUNGEONS

Many DMs treat their dungeon maps like flowcharts: static connections with limited choices and controlled results: If the PCs head east from the statuary, they come to the great pit where the cave trolls live; should they head west instead, they enter the crypts of a vampire wizard. The PCs rarely interact with a creature unless they enter its assigned area. Surrounding spaces have little influence on the location occupied by the party.

Dynamic dungeons are more story-driven adventures. A major NPC has a plan of action and carries it out unless the PCs interfere. For example, the assassin Vorden attacks the party in town during the late afternoon. No matter where the PCs go, Vorden follows them. In the early evening, undead erupt from the cemetery at the command of the necromancer Jubal Fareye; the guards run for help, perhaps calling on the PCs. Both these events are meant to distract the party so that they will not interfere when the necromancer begins his dread ceremony at midnight. The ritual occurs in a hidden temple of Nerull, which the characters must enter to halt Jubal's plans.

In static dungeons, the PCs' position and movements determine what they do and what they encounter. A dynamic dungeon has a timeline and anticipates how the PCs can alter the course of events. Story-driven adventures, also allow more control over where the PCs go. If they learn that the necromancer's hideout is beneath Dorfman's Tavern, they probably will visit and investigate the establishment, but you do not have to draw a detailed map of the area around the tavern. In a static dungeon, the areas adjoining the necromancer's lair are important, and the party could approach from one of several directions. Mapping out the physical space is much more important in such a situation.

A timeline also gives you more flexibility to switch things around. If the PCs spot Vorden before he strikes, you can have him react by fleeing, adopting a disguise, and returning later. The assassin's behavior dynamically alters to fit the PCs' actions. In a static dungeon, the PCs have no effect on the setting, aside from what they encounter based on which direction they travel.

Working dynamic elements into a dungeon requires designing it much as you might approach a city-based adventure. The dungeon is merely the physical boundary of the action, the stage on which the story unfolds. The actors are the NPCs and monsters that dwell within, who take action against the PCs and respond to their reactions.

DUNGEONS AS SYSTEMS

Many dungeons consist of rooms that exist in isolation. Even if a few chambers are connected by a theme or a group of monsters, these are separate areas that happen to be near other, unrelated parts of the dungeon.

Treating a dungeon as a system turns this idea on its head. In this model, you consider an entire level, or even the layers of a multilevel dungeon, as one large connected "encounter" with which the PCs interact. They must solve problems presented by different parts of the dungeon to proceed through it.

"Solve" need not mean overcoming intellectual challenges. The PCs might have to defeat a series of monsters that work together, activate an ancient machine, repair glyphs that bind an evil force, or place a statue on the correct pedestal to open a portal, perhaps doing all of these things in a prescribed order. Their actions in one part of the dungeon have important effects elsewhere. For example, the PCs defeat an orc chieftain on an upper level and discover among his possessions a stone brick inscribed with an ancient rune. Later, they come to a sealed doorway at the end of a brick path. On each brick is a rune, and six bricks are missing. The PCs must now locate the other five before they can open the door.

A dungeon as a system includes fun, interesting connections between various locations. Such design also requires the PCs to visit many (if not all) locations in the dungeon, rather than bypassing side passages to push ahead. However, for such a system to work, the link between areas should be clear. Use detailed descriptions that point out physical or thematic similarities, or even tell the players directly that an area reminds their characters of a place they have visited before. If the clues are too subtle, play is likely to bog down as players attempt to discern the connection, and they might become frustrated if the answer does not come readily.

MEMORABLE MONSTERS

Many classic dungeon adventures introduce new monsters. *Vault of the Drow* brought the wonders and terrors of a drow city into D&D for the first time. *Dwellers of the Forbidden City* introduced the vile yuan-ti. Creating a new monster, or putting a new slant on an established creature, is a great way to make a dungeon unique and to

Memorable monsters behave in unexpected ways

Illus. by J. Hodgson

challenge the players into revising tactics and adopting new strategies.

The *Monster Manual* has all the basic rules you need to create new monsters, and a full discussion on the art of monster design is beyond the scope of this book. If you do not want to build a monster from scratch, try tweaking an existing creature to fit your purpose. You can make several easy changes that can have a major impact on game play.

Behavior

Unexpected behavior is a great way to make monsters distinctive. Such a change is easy to implement, because the monster's statistics remain unchanged. As the PCs learn how the monster acts through experience and combine this knowledge with what else they know, they can figure out what's happening. The moment of discovery lends a thrill of excitement and accomplishment as the PCs devise new approaches to dealing with the threat.

How a monster acts depends on its ultimate aims, or on its part in a larger system. Its behavior can affect combat encounters, stealth encounters, or roleplaying encounters, and should never be random. Fanatical worshipers of Erythnul rush forward to attack heedlessly, even if they are creatures normally known for their reserve, because to hide or flee would invoke their deity's wrath. The undead guardians of a crypt never attack anyone who wears a golden mask of Hextor, allowing high priests and other important visitors unrestricted access. Gray renders in a mad alchemist's dungeon have been warped and mutated by tainted water.

Variant monster behavior must be consistent and easy to notice after brief observation. Once the PCs realize that monsters are acting unusually, they should understand (or at least suspect) the reason behind it. If strange behavior occurs only intermittently, the PCs are likely to overlook it and thus not recognize the important clue it was meant to provide.

Monstrous Theme

You can build a unique identity for a dungeon, or a single area within a it, by connecting your monsters with a theme. For example, one dungeon level is a mechanical haven filled with grinding gears, clattering machinery, and metal hallways. This region is ruled by an intelligent iron golem and its warforged minions, with other constructs dwelling amid its works. Or perhaps the abandoned laboratory complex of a mad alchemist is choked with weird vegetation that grew after a disastrous experiment claimed the alchemist's life. Shambling mounds, assassin vines, and less familiar plant creatures prowl the halls. Thick tangles fill the hallways, growing back only hours after being cleared.

A theme should focus on one significant trait that the PCs can pick up on easily. Monster type is a good place to start, but some types are too broad to work well. A dungeon of giants sounds cool at first, but the giant type includes considerably different sorts of creatures, such as frost giants, fire giants, trolls, and ogres. In this case, you might be better off choosing a specific type of giant first, and then adding creatures to support it.

Your theme can instead focus on description, including sensory information such as sound and color, to make an ordinary monster into something special. For example, the orcs of the Roaring Caverns dye their skin bright blue. They charge into battle shrieking a piercing war cry, and their champions carry large, colorful banners into the fight. Such changes leave the monsters' mechanics intact, but the visual description makes them stand out and remain in the players' memories long after the adventure is over.

Cultural themes also help make otherwise familiar monsters vivid and distinct. Perhaps the above orcs also ride giant lizards into battle. They tame and keep snakes as pets, using them much as other cultures use dogs. Guardian snakes patrol the edges of their camp, and orc warriors paint snakes on their shields and banners. Tribal leaders use snake venom on their weapons. Barbarians take on a snakelike aspect when they rage—they grow fangs, their eyes become serpentine in appearance, and their skin becomes scaly. Such details need not have any game effect (although you can add a simple template or other alternative rules).

Choose a single overwhelming theme that permeates a monstrous culture than a number of weaker themes. Think of the class features that are important to the NPCs among the monsters, and then consider how your cultural theme can alter the expression of those features. A totem creature is a great choice because it can apply to every aspect of the monsters' lives. For example, bugbear assassins from a spider cult might wield poisoned daggers crafted to look like spider fangs. Goblinoid cavalry that serves the cult rides giant spiders. Powerful NPCs within the organization wear *slippers of spider climbing* or *cloaks of arachnida*. Regardless of the theme, the monster's distinctive traits should be readily apparent to the PCs when they first encounter it or enter its territory.

Fudge It

In many cases, you can alter a monster's abilities without radically changing its Challenge Rating or recalculating its statistics. This approach works particularly well with a monstrous theme. For example, the dungeon of the mad alchemist described earlier is overrun with vegetation, turning the residents into strange plant hybrids. Using an ordinary creature (such as an orc) as your base, you can give it a "plant subtype" and give it the appropriate traits for plants, but otherwise leave the base statistics unchanged. The resulting "plant orc" retains its normal Hit Dice and attack bonus, and still poses an appropriate threat for its Challenge Rating. Give the creature an evocative name and an intriguing physical description, and the hybrid orcs become an interesting encounter that requires very little work on your part.

The key to fudging a monster's statistics lies in keeping the creature close to its original power level. Altering a creature's type often introduces new immunities, simple changes that rarely affect Challenge Rating but require different tactics than expected. Small defensive adjustments such as slightly thicker natural armor or a minor damage reduction against certain weapon types can also cause PCs to rethink their standard approach without making the creature substantially more dangerous.

Offensive abilities are harder to add to a monster because they are more likely to change its Challenge Rating. If you give a standard girallon a +5 bonus on its attack rolls without adjusting it in any other way, it hits and rends far more often. A fighter who could hold off the girallon on his own for 3 rounds now falls in half the time. You could reduce its hit points and Armor Class to balance its improved attacks, but if the monster wins initiative, it might tear the party apart before those factors make a difference. If you really want to alter a monster's offensive abilities, compare your revised creation to existing creatures and consult the CR guidelines on page 302 of the *Monster Manual* to ensure it is still an appropriate challenge for the PCs. It is better to overestimate the creature's combat effectiveness, and perhaps have it fall sooner than you expected, than to underestimate its capabilities and unleash a party killer.

DUNGEON FACTIONS AND INTERACTIONS

Some dungeons, particularly sealed tombs and places that have not had visitors for years, settle into a constant state. Still, many host a variety of creatures with different attitudes and conflicting purposes. Such rivalries help make a dungeon a dynamic system, as described earlier. When the PCs eventually enter, they do not face a series of isolated rooms and levels. The dungeon's inhabitants fight for territory, seek treasure, and otherwise pursue their agendas. The PCs' activities alter how these groups act instead of just clearing out one level after another.

Building factions in a dungeon is similar to creating NPCs, but on a larger scale. A faction should have a unique, colorful trait that makes it stand out. Consider why the faction is in the dungeon and how it fits into the grand scheme. Focus on how the faction operates, who leads it, and what resources it can call upon.

Because factions operate on a larger scale, they can affect a dungeon level or perhaps an entire dungeon, and they provide rich fodder for roleplaying. Factions work best when you define the relationships between them, just as between individual NPCs. As the old saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The PCs can ally with one faction against another, or work

Denizens within a dungeon battle for treasure

Illus. by T. Nordstrand

with a group to defeat tough monsters, ensure that relatively peaceful or friendly dungeon dwellers gain power, and otherwise achieve their goals. However, the PCs cannot be sure that their new allies will remain true. Once the mutual goal has been attained, hostilities might well resume.

Make sure the PCs find signs of the factions' interactions. Battle sites should feature corpses, broken weapons and shields, and so forth that identify the various groups involved. The PCs might intercept a courier bearing messages between allies, read graffiti scrawled in an opposing faction's territory, or fight unlikely combinations of monsters.

Faction Identity

When you create a dungeon faction, think about the questions below. The preceding material dealing with NPCs and unique monsters applies equally well when creating interesting faction leaders and members.

Goals: What are the faction's goals and plans for the dungeon? For example, a temple devoted to the Elder Elemental Eye might seek to enslave the inhabitants and form them into an army to attack a nearby village.

Relationships: How does this faction relate to others in the dungeon? In the above example, other dungeon inhabitants fight enslavement by the cultists. An orc tribe decimated by cult raids and a rival temple dedicated to Hextor have formed a tenuous alliance against the Elder Elemental Eye. Meanwhile, a small group of dwarves in the dungeon makes guerrilla strikes against both sides.

PC Effect: What will happen if the PCs do not interfere? In the above example, the Hextor worshipers might call an aspect of their deity to fight the cult, culminating in a titanic struggle that wipes out all three factions. The aspect then leaves the dungeon and begins to lay waste to the surroundings. Conversely, how can the PCs change the relationship between the factions? Perhaps they crush the temple and stop the ritual of summoning, only to learn that they have inadvertently removed the last obstacle to the Elder Elemental Eye cultists' plans for conquest. To complicate matters further, drop hints to the PCs that the Hextorites have a mighty enemy, an even greater evil. The characters then must make a difficult decision: If they do not attack, the aspect of Hextor will arise and cause unimaginable destruction. But if they stop the aspect, they might expose the world to a far worse threat.

Do the PCs' actions change the factions' attitudes, relations, and plans? In search of an important item, they might attack and greatly weaken one group of hostile creatures. After resting, the PCs return to find that the remaining enemies have been wiped out by rivals from another part of the dungeon. Now the item they seek is in the hands of other, potentially more dangerous creatures.

THE DUNGEON'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

Inhabitants bring dungeons to life. Like any other setting in the D&D game, dungeons can be full of internal intrigue and conflict, making them fine areas for roleplaying. When you populate your creation, you don't have to give every creature a unique motivation or role, but a few choice actors besides the obvious villain can liven up the adventure.

Each of the following roles defines a creature's or character's basic motivations for being and staying in the dungeon, as well as more general goals. The most interesting or significant creatures in your dungeon can take on more than one of these roles.

Aide: An aide provides assistance to the PCs. Unlike a broker (see below), this NPC usually doesn't expect reward or compensation. Aides can be placed strategically to ensure that the PCs have needed assistance at a crucial moment so that the adventure doesn't bog down while they rest and recover. These NPCs usually supply tangible game-related benefits such as equipment, healing, and shelter.

Broker: Brokers are the businesspeople of the dungeon, dealing in anything from equipment to secrets. They might work for the powers that rule the locale, or they might be independent. A broker who becomes powerful or influential enough can end up being one of the dungeon's major players. Many brokers work for profit, but others prefer favors or some other form of nonmonetary compensation.

Captive: Captives are common in dungeons. Most intelligent evil creatures that have need or desire for such "luxuries" have no qualms about enslaving those weaker than they are. Other prisoners are kept for ransom or as pawns in political games. More unfortunate prisoners form part of a monster's larder or a group of sacrifices bound for a wicked altar.

Commander: Where sentient creatures congregate, leaders also appear. The role of commander can be literal, referring to a creature that leads others directly. Some commanders are passive, expecting their servants to make their lives comfortable and interesting, but others take on the role of petty warlord or would-be conqueror. Subtler commanders are masterminds that work as the power behind the throne or manipulate the common folk, in the form of false prophets or charismatic rebels. Most mysterious are the puppeteers that guide events toward secret ends but are uninterested in direct influence over dungeon inhabitants.

Deviant: A dungeon is a wonderful place to hide twisted tastes from the world at large. Whether it's a penchant for torture, the worship of a forbidden god, or a desire to raise armies of shambling corpses, a deviant lifestyle is offensive to generally recognized standards of "good" and requires some obfuscation. Deviants conceal their acts, revealing themselves only inadvertently through clues such as missing persons or looted graves. But some are just biding time until they've amassed enough power to bring their shocking beliefs or practices to light. For a twist, consider a good character who is considered deviant by fellow members of an evil culture. Perhaps an orc has decided to devote himself to a noble god of war, such as Dol Dorn or Heironeous, and is quietly raising an army to convert his benighted kin.

Enigma: Sometimes a creature or character has an inscrutable purpose unrelated to the apparent nature of the locale it inhabits. Other creatures have thoughts and desires wholly alien to the humanoid mindset. Such a creature could be a remnant of a bygone era, an original inhabitant of a complex turned to another use, or an invader from another reality. Sometimes, an enigmatic NPC can impart some secret knowledge, but just as often, its mystery cannot be uncovered without effort.

Explorer: The PCs aren't the only adventurers. Individuals have varying reasons for delving into the unknown, and dungeons offer the opportunity for such delving. An explorer is in it for the sheer thrill of discovery; a character with a greater purpose is a seeker (see below). Such characters might be willing to help the party, or they might be the ones who need help. But they might also want to be the first or only ones to make a particular find, putting them at odds with other explorers—including the PCs.

Guardian: Guardians exist to watch and protect, whether they're soldiers garrisoning entry points into their living space or ancient constructs bound to defend an even older portal to another world. The most common type of guardian is a simple humanoid warrior, but magic or duty can compel all sorts of creatures to become guardians. Some guardians serve as gatekeepers, granting passage to those with the proper key or password, while others keep something dangerous within, rather than keeping intruders out.

Hook: A hook character draws the PCs deeper into the current adventure, or might be the reason for the adventure. Hook characters can also be pointers to side quests the heroes can undertake later. Such a character can have other roles but is your primary tool to move the story along, accelerate the action, or drop a needed hint. Hook characters are great DM resources, but they also reward roleplaying, making players more conscious of the alternatives to fighting.

Inhabitant: Monsters have to live somewhere, and the default dwelling for most creatures is in the dungeon, where they simply go about their life activities. In the societies of civilized beings, inhabitants are the experts and commoners, while warriors act as guardians (see above). A unique NPC might also be an inhabitant of the dungeon, but this role is secondary.

Killer: Another default role for many dungeon creatures, the killer exists simply as a combat threat. Being a killer doesn't mean that a creature can't or won't employ stealth and trickery. An assassin who stalks her mark through the dungeon fills the role just as much as the orc barbarian who brooks no challengers in his domain.

Lost: Explorers and seekers get lost from time to time, but the truly lost are those creatures that never even intended to be where they are. They remain free, however, unlike captives. Most lost creatures want to find their way back to a specific place or, barring that, out of the place they're in. Some are unable to escape, trapped between the hammer and anvil of rival enemy factions but with enough supplies and resourcefulness to survive.

Lunatic: Crazed individuals, oblivious to (or with twisted perceptions of) reality, wander into situations and surroundings that others fear. Some of these lunatics are gifted with a "bard's tongue," speaking prophetic truths and cryptic clues. Those with warped minds and prodigious magical powers sometimes create their own maddening environments. Other insane creatures choose to dwell among those unlike themselves, especially aberrations, and many have been twisted in mind and body.

Pariah: The behavior or desires of such characters put them at odds with the society of their birth, but not so much as might a deviant's warped motives. Criminals and fugitives, whether justly or wrongly accused, are pariahs, as are those in self-imposed exile, such as hermits. Other pariahs have strange personal views that can be proven only in the crucible of the dungeon or played out in isolation from other beings. Sometimes a pariah needs a place to hide and defenses to shore up that hiding place.

Seeker: A seeker is motivated by a purpose, whether a life's aim or a great reward. A treasure hunter is a seeker after wealth, a lorekeeper searches for knowledge, a slaver hunts for living "commodities," and a body snatcher steals corpses for dark rituals. Crusaders and paladins seek foes to smite and perceived wrongs to right. A seeker's purpose might run counter to that of the PCs, or you might place the NPC in the dungeon to provide an ally or offer assistance.

Schemer: Some schemers, like seekers, seek to fulfill a grand plan or overwhelming desire. The primary difference between the two is that a schemer doesn't openly pursue the goal but instead gathers resources and agents. Some schemers have no particular goals but are scoundrels who use their cleverness to best advantage.

Worshiper: Worshipers are most common in sites built as temples, but they can be found anywhere religion exists. Strange cults centered on eldritch mysteries or dark gods are staples of fantasy adventure, and whole dungeons are built to hide and house religious organizations. Sometimes devotees can contact the object of their worship only within a dungeon, which might contain the essence of a dead deity, a sleeping or imprisoned outsider, or another mighty creature, such as a great wyrm or ancient aboleth.

RANDOM ROLES

To ease the pressure of picking roles, and to allow some happy accidents of unusual combinations, use Table 4–1 to determine an NPC's role randomly. Roll two or more times to get multifaceted characters; you can either reroll a duplicate result or allow the duplication to indicate a severe leaning in the NPC's personality. Each of these roles are described earlier in this section.

Table 4–1: Random NPC Roles

d%	Result	d%	Result
01–05	Aide	51–56	Inhabitant
06–10	Broker	57–60	Killer
11–16	Captive	61–67	Lost
17–22	Commander	68–72	Lunatic
23–28	Deviant	73–81	Pariah
29–34	Enigma	82–87	Seeker
35–40	Explorer	88–94	Schemer
41–45	Guardian	95–100	Worshiper
46–50	Hook		

VARIANT BEHAVIOR

Monster supplements often provide great detail about the society and ecology of a kind of creature, but these bits of information aren't strict rules. Surprise your players once in a while by making familiar creatures act in unusual or bizarre ways for their kind. Maybe the zombies in a mine area of the dungeon have been set to work, and they attack only those who step adjacent to them. Clever PCs can use that to their advantage.

But every variant behavior need not be advantageous to the heroes. If kobolds have delved between the surface and the roof of a massive cavern that holds dire bats, perhaps the little reptilians have tamed the bats and learned to ride them. They have the advantages of a lair that's hard to reach and of Large flying mounts. The PCs won't know what to think.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When you create a unique character for your dungeon, you need to consider a few details besides role. A few moments of adding details can make your NPC and your dungeon seem more alive and dynamic.

What are the NPC's actual goals? Toward that end, what resources are available? Think about lairs, followers, magic items, treasure, and abilities: How do these resources play into the character's goals? What does the character still need in order to effectively meet those goals? How do other creatures, factions, and unique NPCs interact with this character in the dungeon environment?

What is next for the character? Considering the above role, goals, and resources, decide what your NPC would do if the PCs never entered the dungeon. Imagine how the meddling of adventurers might alter the NPC's goals and actions.

SAMPLE DUNGEON CAST

Here are several unique creatures and characters modeled on the roles described above.

The Black Worm: (Enigma, Hook) Many monsters worship this half-fiend purple worm as a deity, claiming that it seeks the buried, bound form of an evil god. The tunnels it bores don't just create and link levels of its dungeon, but they also break into distant, unrelated dungeons. The locals offer sacrifices to the Black Worm in hopes of appeasing it and its imprisoned master. As the PCs approach, the creature burrows into a chamber, perhaps drawn by the sounds of battle. It attacks a few random combatants, then burrows away.

Arleena the Pure: (Aide, Pariah, Worshiper) Arleena, a cleric of Pelor, wants to prove her deity's power and mercy, and does so by trying to convert evil creatures to her faith. A number of ogres have been swayed by her words and now follow her. She controls a small area of the dungeon and offers healing, food, and protection to all its inhabitants as long as they swear to convert to Pelor's faith. Her ogre followers protect her from aggressive dungeon denizens and offer tithes to Pelor that Arleena uses to strengthen her burgeoning underground sect. The PCs might be in pursuit of a villain who is now under her protection.

Grayspike: (Broker, Hook, Commander) A cunning, avaricious roper, Grayspike occupies a critical juncture at which many passages meet. It allows creatures to pass without harm if they pay it tribute in the form of food, gold, and other trinkets, as well as information. Passersby can also buy information from Grayspike, who believes it has nothing to fear from the dungeon's other occupants. Little happens in the dungeon without Grayspike's knowledge, owing to its spy network of kobolds.

Halaster Blackcloak: (Commander, Enigma, Lunatic) The mysterious and mad Halaster created and rules Undermountain, the infamous dungeon under Waterdeep in the Forgotten Realms setting. He is the classic puppeteer commander, ordering the halls and chambers under the City of Splendors with little concern for petty factions and trifling dungeon monarchs. His purposes are unfathomable—if he has any rationale beyond his lunacy.

Phaldron: (Deviant, Hook, Schemer) Sentenced to death for conducting strange experiments on living humanoids, the wizard Phaldron continues his work deep in a dungeon, far from prying eyes. His charming personality masks his amoral nature and his practice of necromancy. He befriends explorers, offers them shelter in his lair, and claims to be in search of a magical text hidden in the dungeon. When the opportunity presents itself, Phaldron steals a few useful items from his guests and flees to a deeper level. In the meantime, his twisted creations slowly spread through the dungeon, overwhelming weaker creatures.

DUNGEON THEMES

Building a dungeon from scratch can be a daunting process, but if you create a theme, your job becomes much easier. Building one themed dungeon can be a project for a short game, while creating several can be part of building a world. In fact, various levels of a dungeon can have different themes.

Aspects of the Dungeons & Dragons milieu, as well as those of the real world, can help you decide on a theme. This section presents thematic topics to give your dungeon a starting point. A few elements are central to the D&D game and to designing a dungeon and its theme. Keep these three categories in mind.

Discovery: The hidden waits to be found, mysteries to be solved, and unknown territory to be discovered. Discovery is an alluring facet of the adventuring life. Finding clues to unanswered questions, seeing sights rarely beheld by mortal eyes, and uncovering tantalizing clues to newer and greater finds can be just as much fun as fighting monsters and winning treasure. Great dungeons play into the players' sense of wonder and desire to explore a fantasy world.

Magic: In a world full of magic, anything that can be imagined can be done, even beyond the limits of the rules. Practitioners of the spellcasting arts build bizarre sanctuaries, and magical creatures create eerie effects. Spontaneous magic can bring forth wonders never seen in the mundane world, and uncontrolled supernatural forces can warp the commonplace into the fantastic. On the flip side, lack of magic can also be a part of a setting's theme—as long as that lack doesn't render irrelevant the chosen role of one or more PCs.

Treasure: To many D&D players, it's all about the loot. Even in the most story-oriented game, treasure is important to how the PCs function and helps them succeed as they advance. Whole dungeons might be built simply to house one awesome or dangerous item, or they can hold vast and varied wealth in the possession of many different creatures. Not only should treasure be present in every dungeon you create, but the spoils the heroes carry away should also be interesting and tied to the dungeon's theme.

ABSTRACTION

In addition to the core values for creating dungeons, many abstract concepts can be used to form themes.

Alignment: Chaos calls to mind twisting corridors, changeable environments, and unpredictable encounters, while law suggests orderly layouts where every room and every creature has a purpose within a grand design. Good carries with it the suggestion of boons for the worthy and barriers designed to thwart evil, perhaps faded in power over time. Evil holds quiet scheming, iniquitous behavior, wanton violence, and corruption of body, mind, and soul. Beyond these simple aspects are combinations of alignments, as well as differing ideals within each.

Death: Death has many faces. Necromancers meddle with rituals best left unknown, calling unnatural fates down on the innocent. A dungeon can be designed simply as a death trap. Impending death changes the way creatures act—visions of mortality can shake even the stalwart. A dungeon might also contain elements that literally sap life. Restless dead might be shambling monsters, but they can also take the forms of psychic impressions, frightening apparitions, illusions of safety on the edge of danger, or whispers in the dark.

Emotion: One or more emotions can inspire a dungeon's theme. In the old cliché, madness drives a wizard to create a vast dungeon for his macabre purposes. Darker emotions are obvious choices, and extreme emotions are easier to use, but lighter emotions such as joy and wonder are equally valid. A dungeon can be anything from an ancient "amusement park" for a long-gone magical society, filled with elements of play (albeit dangerous) and riddles, to a soul-trapping sepulcher built by a ruler who was afraid of the afterlife.

History: Remnants of the past lie buried, awaiting the intrepid and bold. Tombs of greedy monarchs and plotting wizards are sealed against invaders, and the ruins of ancient civilizations stand in wildernesses that were once civilized lands. A threat seen once every millennium might be only a few years from awakening. A time of prophecy could be at hand.

Life: The other side of dissolution and decay, life can be central to a dungeon. Abundant flora, thriving fauna, and obvious signs of health and plenty are all possible, along with the merciless aspect of untamed nature. Disease is an aspect of life, if an unpleasant one, and might produce unusual effects in survivors. An entire dungeon can be alive, even if it's not sentient, its walls formed of living plants, animals, or raw flesh. Other environments might be life-giving to one sort of creature but dangerous to another.

Philosophy: A world has as many philosophies as it has sentient creatures, but it also has overarching belief structures and truths. Dungeons can support or thwart a specific faith or creed in the campaign world. A place could have been originally designed for philosophical reasons but turned to a secondary or contrary purpose later. Philosophy also suggests "philosophers"—inhabitants such as clerics, druids, knights, monks, and paladins.

Weirdness: Dungeons don't necessarily require concrete purposes. Maybe a dungeon arises as the by-product of other forces interacting. Perhaps the place is a manifestation somehow important to beings beyond the ken of mortals, or it's tied to the cosmology of the world in ways no mere PC can understand. The bizarre dungeon model (see page 70) is a natural fit with this theme. Weirdness encourages you to let your imagination run wild. Remember, though, a little can go a long way.

ENVIRONMENT

Where you choose to set your dungeon can be your theme and tells players a great deal about it.

Alien: If you want to catch your players off guard, create a dungeon with an environment that is completely strange and threatening, and inhabitants that are warped and incoherent. Pseudonatural creatures (*Lords of Madness* 161) and aberrations often inhabit such environments, and insanity and horror are part of the mix.

Artificial: Cities and other areas of mundane habitation are created by their inhabitants, but in the context of dungeons, an artificial environment is a locale made to look and perhaps feel like another. Magic and superior craftsmanship make such strangeness possible. The Dungeon of Chains described on page 82 is such a place: Its creators filled a cavern of unknowable depth with hanging chains and cubes of stone and iron, possibly trying to imitate the Infernal Battlefield of Acheron.

Elemental: Unlike alien environments and other sorts of planar settings, in elemental dungeons the familiar takes on uncanny forms and actions. Elemental forces can produce effects like those of magic, such as walls of fire or floors made of concentrated smoke. These elements are much more likely in elemental dominions, as well as in places where such forces bleed into the Material Plane. They can be exceedingly strange: Imagine a dungeon carved into a Colossal earth elemental that still lives, or a submerged set of passages created by bound water elementals.

Light and Dark: Darkness, light, and shadow can play roles in your dungeon theme. A lightless deep could be home to more than drow and grimlocks; perhaps in such an area even the ability of the baatezu to see in darkness is thwarted. Shadowy locales evoke a sense of foreboding and hidden danger. Bright light suggests safety, but for underground denizens might also point to heat and potential blindness, or to a large settlement of potentially hostile beings.

Mundane: As opposed to the otherworldly environments suggested here, a dungeon might be constructed from or within natural settings; it needn't even be underground. Underwater locales are challenging to land-dwelling characters, disorienting and constantly dangerous, and inhabited by creatures at home in such conditions. A "dungeon" might consist of passages cut into giant trees, laid across their branches, hacked through thick undergrowth at their bases, and cut into the loamy earth under their roots. A complex of bridges stretching between columns over open lava might be exciting, as could a quaking pillar of earth and stone that never quite collapses. Civilized territories form their own sort of terrain, where twisting back alleys, abandoned warehouses, and stinking sewers can form a dungeon of sorts, singly or together. (For more on this idea, see the *Cityscape* supplement.)

Planar: Besides the elemental, other realms outside the Material Plane provide thematic fodder. Aspects of one or more planes might cross another, creating a region unlike any of them. What could a "leak" from the Positive Energy Plane or the influence of Mechanus do to a dungeon? What about both at the same time? Otherworldly beings become trapped, or they invade, with inscrutable motivations and machinations. Mortal beings seek to truck with outsiders for various reasons, and their risky experimentation or meddling might have unforeseen consequences. Or perhaps they too become trapped between worlds.

FUNCTION

Form follows function. Despite the possibilities presented by weirdness and magic, most dungeons are facilities inhabited by intelligent beings. More often than not, a dungeon was built to simply suit the needs of its builders. A typical dungeon might include several of the general functions described here, perhaps in different sections or forming an overall theme.

Concealment: Enclosed and limited spaces are great for hiding objects and creatures. Dangerous though they are, dungeons are also ideal hideouts for fugitives and pariahs (see The Dungeon's Cast of Characters, page 76), who risk peril for the sake of freedom or an aberrant lifestyle. A dungeon might be the

NO MINDFLAYERS ALLOWED

A dungeon can contain the disconcertingly mundane

Illus. by T. Nordstrand

vault of a fabulous or ghastly artifact, the prison or refuge of a marvelous beast, or both. It can even be built to conceal other locations, accessible only through its well-defended portals.

Fortification: Defense is important, whether as protection against enemies or as a bulwark against natural and supernatural disasters. Dungeons can be military facilities, emergency shelters, or refuges for imperiled people against ruthless leaders. Sometimes a dungeon is built to defend against a particular threat, such as the depredations of a dragon, and later abandoned when the danger passes. Opportunistic squatters eventually move in.

Restraint: Related to concealment and even fortification, restraining dungeons are meant to confine creatures or forces that someone doesn't want loose in the world. Such dungeons can be actual prisons, as in the conventions of the trapped archfiend or the archmage's supernatural menagerie. However, they might also be laboratories sealed away to protect the surrounding countryside. Interesting roleplaying possibilities emerge when considering who wants the restraint to work and who doesn't.

Shelter: The most basic need any mortal creature has is shelter: a place to rest, feed, congregate, and propagate. Many creatures in the D&D game choose the cool dark of the underworld over the sunlit surface, while others prefer taking over ruins to building their own edifices. A shelter might be an elaborate construction, a simple hollow in a hillside, or a network of burrows and chambers. Dungeons serving as shelter (sometimes called lairs) include places to work, play, and rest, and often other amenities such as fortifications, storage and waste-removal facilities, and temples. Sometimes an existing structure actually conceals a warren excavated beneath or within.

Storage: Some dungeons exist as mere storehouses. The most common storage dungeon is a tomb, a place to hold the deceased and perhaps the deceased's belongings. A treasury is another sort of storage facility. But others are forgotten laboratories, libraries, reliquaries, or even monstrous collections of constructs or undead. Storage of some sort of energy is also a possibility, whether that energy is mere wind or wondrous magic.

Worship: Religion often drives culture. Temples and shrines are erected in honor of deities or for the storage of sacred relics. Temple complexes sometimes provide for the needs of a clergy, but they might also offer space for supernatural manifestations related to the deity or religion. Structures dedicated to the gods often house great wealth, making them targets for robbers and opposed faiths.

INHABITANTS

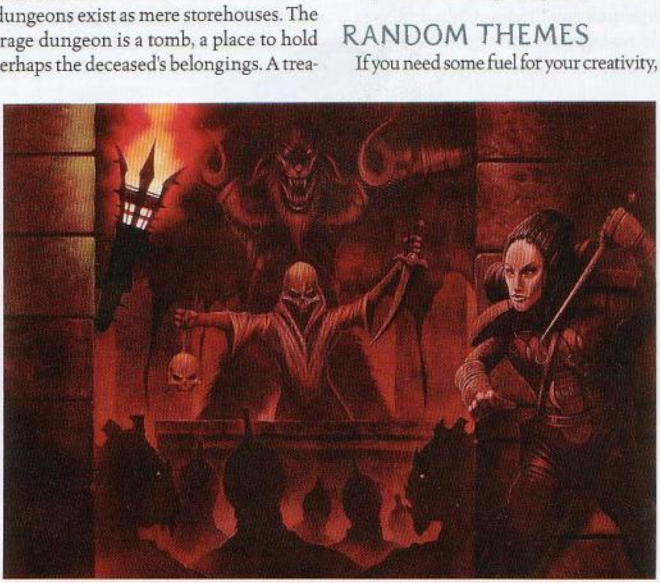
Who or what inhabits a place largely determines that place's layout. All sorts of intelligent creatures exist in the D&D game, and they have certain needs, even if their nature is alien.

Physiology: The capabilities of a strange creature determine how its home differs from that of a humanoid. Flying creatures have no use for floors or horizontal passages in their living spaces, and they certainly don't need to build amenities that suit two-legged intruders—stairs, bridges, and ground-level entries. Aquatic creatures need water, and their habitations are similarly unrestricted vertically, but they can't readily use fire, which can be an impediment to building and tool making. Spells and spell-like abilities enable all sorts of strangeness, such as a beholder using its *disintegrate* eye ray to build a home of vertical shafts.

Psychology: Alignment is an important aspect of psychology, but it's not the only expression of how a creature thinks. Details of a creature's society are helpful in determining how it builds and subsists, as wells as who or what it might want as allies, pets, or slaves. These factors offer good storytelling and roleplaying possibilities by creating factions within a dungeon, since certain creatures loathe one kind of being and prefer the company of others.

RANDOM THEMES

If you need some fuel for your creativity, roll on the tables here to create random dungeon themes. Better results come from rolling three or more times on Table 4–2: Thematic Elements and moving on from there. If the result you roll indicates another table, roll on that table to refine the result if you wish. The results are described earlier in this section or explained the core rulebooks; emotional flavors are self-explanatory.



Dungeons can conceal a growing evil

Illus. by W. England

Table 4–2: Thematic Elements

d%	Result
01–20	Abstraction (Table 4–3)
21–30	Discovery
31–45	Environment (Table 4–4)
46–65	Function (Table 4–5)
66–80	Inhabitants (Table 4–6)
81–90	Magic
91–100	Treasure

Table 4–3: Abstraction

d%	Result
01–15	Alignment (Table 4–10)
16–30	Death
31–45	Emotion (Table 4–7)
46–60	History
61–75	Life
76–90	Philosophy
91–100	Weirdness

Table 4–4: Environment

d%	Result
01–15	Alien
16–33	Artificial
34–60	Elemental (Table 4–11)
61–75	Light and dark[1]
76–85	Mundane (Table 4–12)
86–100	Planar (Table 4–13)

[1] Roll d%: 01–33, light; 34–66, shadow; 67–100, dark.

Table 4–5: Function

d%	Result
01–15	Concealment
16–30	Fortification
31–45	Restraint
46–70	Shelter
71–88	Storage
89-100	Worship

Table 4–6: Inhabitants

d%	Result
01–15	Physiology
16–30	Psychology
31–75	Type (Table 4–8)
76–100	Subtype (Table 4–9)

Table 4–7: Emotion

d%	Result
01–07	Anger
08–10	Apathy
11–15	Confusion
16–20	Courage
21–25	Desire
26–30	Envy
31–38	Fear
39–45	Grief
46–51	Hate
52–53	Hope
54–55	Joy
56–60	Love
61–67	Pain
68–70	Pity
71–77	Pride
78–82	Repentance
83–88	Serenity
89–92	Shame
93–100	Zeal

Table 4–8: Type

d%	Result
01–10	Aberration
11–17	Construct
18–25	Dragon
26–33	Elemental
34–41	Fey
42–49	Giant
50–57	Humanoid (Table 4–14)
58–65	Magical beast
66–73	Monstrous humanoid
74–78	Ooze
79–86	Outsider (Table 4–15)
87–92	Plant
93–99	Undead/Deathless
100	Vermin

Table 4–9: Subtypes

d%	Result
01–10	Aquatic
11–15	Augmented
16–26	Cold
27–40	Dragonblood
41–55	Humanoid (Table 4–14)
56–66	Incorporeal
67–77	Living construct
78–88	Reptilian
89–97	Shapechanger
98–100	Swarm

Table 4–10: Alignment

d%	Result
01–25	Chaotic
26–50	Evil
51–75	Good
76–100	Lawful

Table 4–11: Elemental

d%	Result
01–25	Air
26–50	Earth
51–75	Fire
76–100	Water

Table 4–12: Mundane[1]

d%	Result
01–11	Airborne
12–21	Aquatic
22–32	Desert
33–43	Forest
44–54	Hills
55–66	Marsh
67–77	Mountain
78–88	Plains
89–100	Underground

[1] Roll d% for the environment's temperature: 01–33, cold; 34–66, temperate; 67–100, warm.

TABLE 4–13: PLANAR

d%	Result
01–05	Abyss
06–09	Acheron
10–13	Arborea
14–17	Arcadia
18–23	Astral
24–27	Beastlands
28–31	Bytopia
32–35	Carceri
36–39	Celestia
40–42	Elemental (Table 4–11)
43–46	Elysium
47–51	Ethereal
52–55	Gehenna
56–59	Hades
60–63	Limbo
64–68	Mechanus
69–74	Negative Energy
75–80	Nine Hells
81–84	Outlands
85–88	Pandemonium
89–92	Positive Energy
93–96	Shadow
97–100	Ysgard

TABLE 4–14: HUMANOIDS

d%	Result
01–11	Dwarf
12–23	Elf
24–35	Goblinoid
36–44	Gnoll
45–55	Gnome
56–66	Halfling
67–83	Human
84–95	Orc
96–100	Other

TABLE 4–15: OUTSIDERS

d%	Result
01–11	Angel
12–23	Archon
24–35	Eladrin
36–47	Guardinal
48–59	Native
60–71	Baatezu
72–82	Tanar'ri
83–89	Yugoloth
90–100	Other

CONNECTING THEMES

When thinking about thematic components, you can be as literal or theoretical as you choose. For example, a dungeon themed with an emotional element of apathy might slowly sap the will of invaders, forcing the PCs to work within time constraints, or the place could be a result of some supernatural force's lack of concern for the Material Plane. A dragon theme might mean draconic architecture and artistic elements in the dungeon's structure, or it could mean simply that the dungeon's primary inhabitant is a dragon. The tables and information in this section are tools to inspire new ideas.

Here are some sample dungeons and their associated themes. The Dungeon of Chains shows a multilevel dungeon concept that is expanded by themed levels.

Abyssal Monastery

(Confusion, Good, Lawful, Magic, Tanar'ri, Worship)

A group of paladins and monks built a monastery, underneath which they guarded an ancient portal to the Abyss. However, demonologists attacked the place, razing the surface buildings and driving out or killing the inhabitants. They then began a ritual to open the portal permanently. Returning paladins disrupted the ritual, but its loosed energy warped the entire subterranean structure, killing paladin and demonologist alike. Today, the spirits of both forces are bound within the dungeon's walls, whispering to explorers. The area resembles a layer of the Abyss, with horrific terrain and architecture, as well as infestations of terrible creatures.

Dungeon of Chains

(Artificial, Shadow, Undead, Underground, Weirdness)

This murky dungeon is an enormous cavern, apparently without end, that teems with wraiths and other flying undead. Steel cages and hollow stone cubes hang from the ceiling by thick adamantine chains, and stone spires rise from the gloom below. The entrances to the cavern run through the ceiling, and the spires hold chambers and stairways that lead to lower levels.

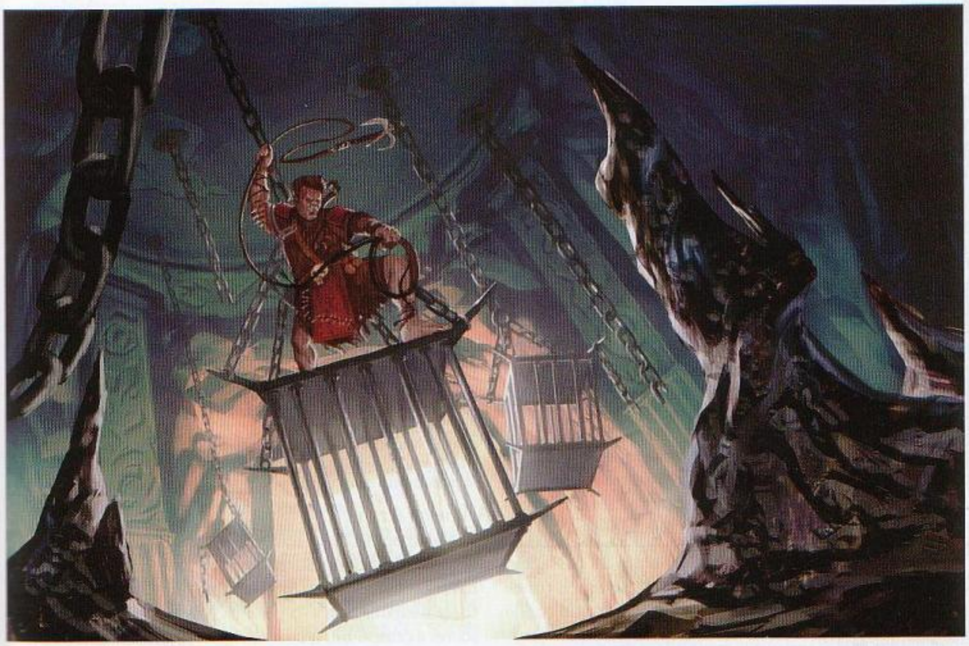
Invisible Chains: (Concealment, Giant, Human, Worship) Cultists of Vecna have built a hidden temple in part of the Dungeon of Chains. Skilled spellcasters, the cultists never leave their hidden chambers without the cover of *invisibility* or related spells. Other invisible creatures, such as a pair of ogre mages, guard the locale against intruders.

Oubliette: (Confusion, Construct, Restraint, Weirdness) This level of the Dungeon of Chains was once a prison. Its corridors twist and turn, and dozens of hidden teleporters whisk intruders back to a central room, making escape difficult. To exit, explorers must find a set of secret passages. Most cells contain just dust and bones, but long-lived creatures remain captive in some, perhaps kept alive by their supernatural or magical natures. Creatures trapped here have gone mad, and they attack all who enter their cells. The wardens, a group of iron golems, emerge to slaughter anyone or anything attempting to tunnel out.

Graveyard of Souls

(Alien, Death, Magic, Undead, Weirdness)

This strange complex is a labyrinth of twisting passages that riddle an unknown black rock, faintly streaked with white. The dungeon has been growing larger over time, and it is said that the deaths of creatures within it fuel this growth. Legend holds that the Graveyard of Souls will grow until it forms an immense rune of annihilation, destroying the world. In fact, the entire dungeon is a vast undead being, fed by a nexus with the Negative Energy Plane. It is not greatly intelligent but is aware enough to try to trap



The Dungeon of Chains

Illus. by M. Coimbra

and deceive living creatures that venture within so that it can feed on their life energy. As it grows, the connection with the Negative Energy Plane becomes stronger, allowing malign energies to spread into the world. Channeling positive energy against the creature can slow its growth or even halt it temporarily, but to completely end the threat the planar rift must be sealed.

Howling Complex

(Air, Airborne, Discovery, Outsider, Worship)

A floating chunk of crystal has appeared over a civilized land, an eerie whining sound issuing from its depths. While it has done no harm so far, the nobility of the realm wish to discern its purpose and dispatch explorers. Within the strange edifice, a nexus connects to the Elemental Plane of Air, filling some hallways with gale-force winds. Creatures caught in the wind risk being blown through the place, though such passages form loops, so it is possible to catch a companion who has been swept away. Djinn, air elementals, and other air creatures live in the complex, and the inner chambers hold a temple to a deity of elemental air.

Oozes of Bol Darus

(Elf, Extraplanar, History, Ooze, Shelter)

Fiendish oozes slew the ancient drow wizard Bol Darus, worshiper of Ghaunadaur, and they still dominate his erstwhile sanctum. Perhaps through a mystic link with their horrific deity, the creatures reached a strange equilibrium of death and reproduction after having swept the place clean of organic material. Legends say the wizard's metal and magic items might still remain, and his hidden treasure caches yet be intact, because the oozes can't pass through the secret doors and wards that guard them.

Orcs of the Barrier Peaks

(Orc, Living Construct, Mountain, Weirdness)

Orcs near the fabled metal dungeon of the Barrier Peaks have been twisted by an unknown force. Some have horns, others have extra limbs, and still others have additional eyes or other strange traits. Psionic powers are common among these orcs, and they aren't as savage as their normal kin. An intelligent iron golem leads the orcs, who worship it as a god.

Reaver Halls

(Goblinoid, History, Philosophy, Treasure, Undead)

The infamous hobgoblin king Grazath, beloved of Hextor, once led a great alliance against the human kingdoms. After he was finally defeated, the remnants of his armies followed him to seek shelter in caverns rich in semiprecious stones. Kangorian, a human archmage, tracked Grazath down and slew him, but not before the hobgoblin general embedded *Dwarf Reaver*, his mighty axe, in a great jade stone while uttering a fell curse in Hextor's name.

Evil humanoids now flock to the caverns, battling endlessly for the right to claim the axe, which is guarded by undead and clerics of Hextor. However, to date all who have grasped the weapon have been slain instantly and transformed into undead, bound to watch over *Dwarf Reaver*. Rumors abound that the clerics of Hextor gather treasures from the fallen, collecting them in a great trove to fund the armies of Grazath's true successor.

Sea Keep

(Aquatic, Human, Fortification, Monstrous Humanoid)

Using strange magic, kuo-toa have flooded the lowest dungeons of seaside Castle Arramar, a place still owned by a duchess with the same family name. Fiendish sharks and other aquatic monsters now prowl the deeps. The kuo-toa are raiding the castle from the black waters and preparing to seize control of the entire bastion.

DUNGEON ROOMS

The most basic features of a dungeon are its passages and, above all, its rooms. After spending so much time making the overall theme of your dungeon exciting and unique, don't forget these basic elements. Not every room needs to offer a combat encounter, but a diverse selection of room types helps to illustrate how the dungeon's inhabitants go about their lives, what they value, and how they might be defeated. Linking rooms logically adds internal consistency to the dungeon environment and helps to bring it alive.

Each of the following room types provides a general account of the room's purpose and design, as well as how such rooms differ according to a dungeon's overall function. Some entries have additional rules pertinent to the room's contents.

ARMORY

The intelligent inhabitants of a dungeon might not always possess enough weapons to arm every member of their group. Thus, they have a central repository of weapons and armor for use in case of an attack. Armories also keep special weapons, such as a ruler's hereditary spear, secure from theft. An armory in a weird dungeon might not be recognizable as such: The weapons of beholders and mind flayers include living parasites, grafts, and tools that are not usable by humanoids. A storage room for such gear looks more like a laboratory than an armory.

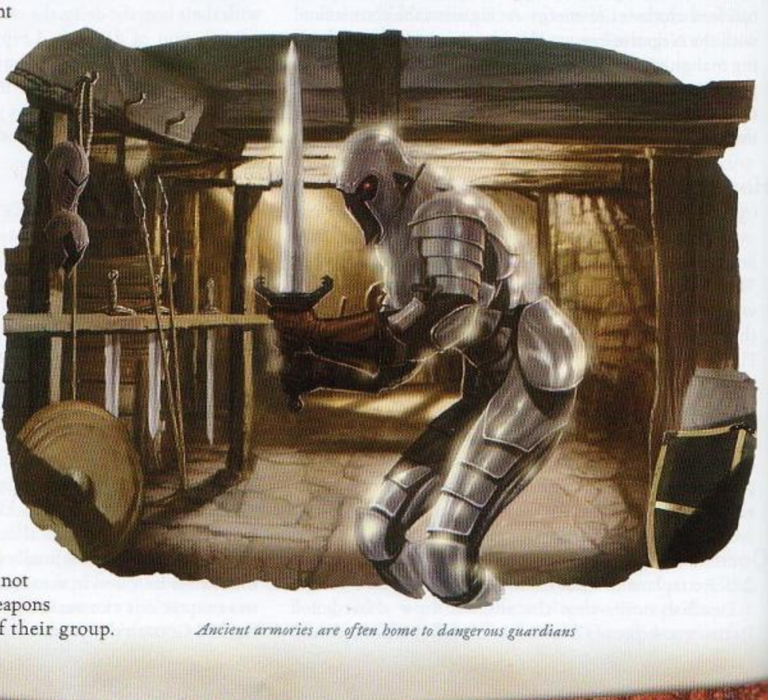
Armories in areas intended as fortification are tidy environments with weapon racks, armor stands, and locked cases for special gear and magic items. These armories frequently include traps, spells, and guardians to keep them secure. In cruder dwellings, arms are just heaped in a chamber not far from sleeping rooms.

Ancient tombs might contain armories built to display the gear used by the tomb's occupants in life. In a death trap dungeon, weapons might fly from their racks or suddenly spring to life. In an interconnected dungeon system, a single weapon could lie hidden among hundreds, waiting for the right wielder to overcome a later challenge.

Ancient Arms

The weapons in many dungeon armories are often old and in poor conditions. Such weapons have half the normal hardness and hit points for their kind, and damage rolls with these weapons take a –1 penalty. Any time such a weapon scores a critical hit, it takes an amount of damage equal to the amount dealt; its (reduced) hardness still applies.

Ancient armor and shields similarly have half the normal hardness and hit points, and the armor check



Ancient armories are often home to dangerous guardians

Illus. by B. Hagan

penalty for wearing such armor increases by 2. Whenever the wearer is the subject of a critical hit, the armor or shield (determined randomly) takes an equal amount of damage; hardness still applies.

Ancient weapons, armor, and shields are worth only 25% of their normal value but might be worth more to a collector interested in such antiquities.

BARRACKS

Barracks represent communal living spaces for soldiers and other members of a dungeon community. Such rooms also house the slaves and servants of more powerful creatures, and might be locked or otherwise secured to prevent their escape. (For the personal living spaces of individual creatures, see Living Quarters, below.)

In fortifications, barracks are rows of bunks, often with footlockers for each resident. They frequently include a communal dining or gathering space. Barracks in dungeons that serve as simple shelter might contain nests, mats, or heaps of straw. Personal possessions and small treasures might be stored under or inside such simple beds or tucked away behind loose stones.

Sometimes a secret passageway is hidden behind or beneath a bunk, whether as a method of escape or as a trap, dumping into the lair of a deadly guardian.

A barracks could also be a kennel for guard animals, which are often penned in until their owners can release them into controlled environments.

Sleeping Creatures

At any given time, some of the dungeon's inhabitants are off duty and likely asleep in their barracks. Sleeping creatures are considered helpless and take a –10 penalty on Listen checks to hear approaching creatures or nearby combat. They have a Dexterity of 0 for the purpose of initiative and other combat-related checks until they awaken.

CRYPT

Built to house the dead, crypts are a common part of many dungeons. These areas are usually sacred and are protected by traps and monsters.

The crypts of powerful or influential beings are ornately decorated monuments. Those of simple folk are large chambers containing dozens of corpses placed on slabs, buried under the floor or in wall niches, or locked away in coffins. Primitive beings treat burial grounds as mystical sites, with piles of skulls, small shrines, and mounds laden with offerings.

Alternatively, a crypt might display bodies of the deceased that have been perfectly preserved through alchemy or magic. In truly fantastic settings, visitors can ask questions of the corpses' lingering spirits, though the answers are not always reliable.

Sometimes crypts have undead guardians, either set to stand watch when the tomb was built, or the restless spirits of their occupants. Sarcophagi are frequently trapped, often releasing undead inhabitants when opened.

Corpse Dust

Ancient corpses are dry and usually consist of little more than crumbled flesh, clothing, and bones. If disturbed or destroyed, such a desiccated corpse releases a cloud of irritating dust that fills a 5-foot square. Air-breathing creatures caught in such a cloud take a –2 penalty on Search checks, Spot checks, and ranged attack rolls while in the cloud and for 1 minute thereafter. A DC 14 Fortitude save negates this penalty.

GUARD ROOM

Most dungeons contain some sort of defensible location where guards are stationed. Such guardians might be eternal, summoned, or ordinary soldiers who serve in shifts. They are the first line of defense, protecting the inhabitants and warning of intruders.

Fortifications typically have well-built guard rooms, with solid barriers that grant cover to defenders, arrow slits into adjacent chambers, and an alarm system. In more utilitarian dungeons, guards staff checkpoints to ensure that those venturing inside are properly prepared, or to keep trespassers out.

In dungeons that protect specific areas or key items, guard rooms typically contain fantastic sentries such as golems, outsiders, or undead. They might also include strengthened barricades or complex traps.

Instead of typical guards, these rooms can contain nuisances such as shriekers or swarms of bats, which make noise when disturbed by intruders and serve as simple alarm systems.

Sounding the Alarm

In most cases, intentionally setting off an alarm, whether it is a cord attached to a bell or a complicated magical warning system, is a move action.

KITCHEN

Most dungeons (except for those populated by nonliving inhabitants) contain at least a rudimentary area for preparing food. Depending upon the needs of the inhabitants, the contents of these chambers vary greatly, from animal pens to fungus farms to fire pits with boiling kettles. The food stores of undead resemble slave pens or holding cells for terrified, living captives whose life energy sustains the monsters. Creatures suspended in a preservative liquid, alien vines growing from fetid pools, or kegs of disgusting paste might represent the kitchen in an alien dungeon.

A civilized society or an ordered fortification usually has dedicated cooks and servants, working in multiple kitchens well stocked with cooking utensils and supplies. These rooms are generally attached to large dining chambers. The kitchens of more primitive inhabitants might be little more than cooking pits, scraps of previous feasts still stuck to the cookware or scattered on the floor.

A kitchen is rarely dangerous unless it is part of a death trap dungeon, but it can still present challenges. Perhaps a powerful creature demands that the PCs cook it a great feast, or the shelves contain the ingredients to make a desperately needed potion—but a single mistake instead produces a vile toxin.

Improvised Weapons

Kitchen gear and utensils can be used as weapons in a pinch (see Improvised Weapons, *PH* 113). Kettles, skillets, and mallets typically deal 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage. Small knives, forks, and skewers deal 1d4 points of piercing damage. Large knives, cleavers, and blades deal 1d6 points of slashing damage. All these statistics assume utensils used by Medium creatures; scale damage up or down for larger or smaller users. Boiling water, oil, and soup deal 1d6 points of fire damage and can be thrown as splash weapons (*PH* 158); submersion in a large kettle of blistering liquid deals 4d6 points of fire damage per round.

LABORATORY

These specialized chambers are dedicated to magical experiments or item creation. They feature delicate and possibly dangerous equipment, incomplete projects, and mysterious substances or creatures. (For chambers dedicated to creation of mundane items, see Workshop, below.)

Laboratories are often kept locked away from ordinary residents, well stocked and well maintained to allow uninterrupted work. The master of a laboratory might command apprentices or assistants, and might well have personal quarters attached to or part of the chamber. Most practitioners obsessively document their experiments, whether in neat notebooks or scribbles on every surface.

Some such chambers serve to animate the dead, to construct golems, or to create new forms of life. They hold bizarre tools, gestating experiments, or glass vats that hold preserved test subjects. A laboratory for dangerous experiments can resemble a trap. It is unstable and might release a contaminated creature, spill a vat of harmful reagents, or explode at any moment.

Side Effects

Fights in a laboratory can set off a number of unintended side effects. Randomly mixing reagents, ingredients, and spell components can create dangerous side effects. The following are a few examples; feel free to invent suitable effects, depending on whether the laboratory contains dangerous components or items that simulate spell effects.

- Small explosion (10-foot radius, 3d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 15 half.)
- Noxious cloud (10-foot radius, nauseated 1d6 rounds, Fortitude DC 15 negates).
- Caustic spill (10-foot radius, 1d6 acid damage per round, Reflex DC 15 half).

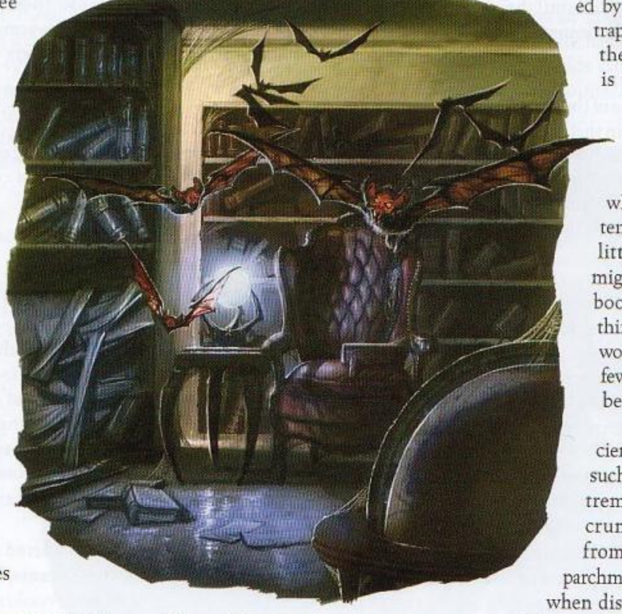
LIBRARY

Shelves of books, racks of scrolls and maps, and carefully inscribed stone tablets all find a home in a library. Although methods for recording information vary, creatures that value collections of knowledge take care to preserve and protect them.

Powerful and dangerous works, such as those in a wizard's fortress, are kept securely protected by formidable locks and traps that pose no threat to the library—poison gas is common, but *fireball* spells are not. Library shelves or even books could animate to attack those who disturb their contents. Creatures that care little for written works might simply dump stolen books, maps, and other things in a heap: Many are worthless or ruined, but a few valuable tomes might be buried within.

The contents of an ancient, abandoned library, such as in a tomb, are extremely decayed. Books crumble when removed from their shelves, and parchment blows away like ash when disturbed. Magic tomes might survive the ravages of time.

Libraries can come in many forms. Alien or crazed beings might stored information in nontraditional ways, including paintings whose scenes move and change, crystals that project



A library holds the answer to many mysteries for those with the patience to search

Illus. by B. Hagan

knowledge when lit, or disembodied brains that answer questions. A library might be the entire history of the dungeon, carved into the walls, floors, and ceiling of a special chamber. That of a fiend might imprison mortal souls to serve as an encyclopedia of the condemned. The library of a nature deity might be written on the leaves of an immense oak tree, and only when a particular leaf falls is its knowledge ready to be learned.

Damaged Books

Books that are ripped or ruined are difficult to understand. A successful DC 20 Decipher Script check is needed to read a mostly intact book; the DC rises to 25 for a badly damaged book and to 30 for a thoroughly torn one. Such a check can take significantly longer than the normal 1 minute if the text must be reassembled first.

Improvised Weapons

A book deals 1d3 points of nonlethal bludgeoning damage. It can be thrown, with a range of 10 feet. Toppled bookcases deal 2d4 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 10 half), or 2d6 points if they are particularly full.

LIVING QUARTERS

While the workers, soldiers, slaves, and common inhabitants of a dungeon stay in barracks or other large communal living spaces, leaders and other powerful individuals often have their own living quarters. More than just sleeping rooms, these quarters are personal chambers, comfortable and decorated in a manner pleasing to their owners.

The living quarters of a ruler or general are built to accommodate tasks of organization and battle preparation as well as personal comfort. They are often guarded, and traps might secure their approach. The strongest member of a savage tribe appropriates the largest area for itself and accumulates personal wealth there. An abandoned or little-used complex might still have a caretaker, who watches over the property and dwells in a simple room.

Undead beings, such as powerful liches, usually maintain opulent quarters (often doubling as a crypt). Although they obviously have no need for the comforts of living creatures, they surround themselves with mementos of their lives, treasure, wicked experimentation, and other amusements of those with all the time in the world. Living quarters are rarely trapped, but those inhabited by undying monsters can be exceptions, or have environments inimical to life.

Unusual beings have bizarre living areas, whether the lofty chamber of a beholder, the alien pool of a mind flayer, or the hellish throne room of a pit fiend. Such chambers are inhospitable to visitors and intruders while providing environmental advantages to their dwellers. Dragon lairs in particular take full advantage of their owners' particular strengths and immunities.

MAZE

Although it isn't exactly a room, a maze provides a simple defense, confounding intruders without need of fortifications or weapons. Some mazes are merely a by-product of the dungeon's design, such as the winding and looping tunnels of a crude warren or a complex network of sewers, while intentional labyrinths feature secret doors, dead ends, sliding walls, traps, and chutes. The defenders of such complexes are intimately familiar with the maze's intricacies, avoiding its dangers while harrying enemies, and lay ambushes at choke points.

Winding passages are common in catacombs, often filled with niches, each containing a corpse. Traps are possible, and undead guardians typical. Incorporeal undead can travel through the walls of the maze to surprise wandering explorers. Some mazes are built for no other purpose than to trap and destroy adventurers. Weird locales might include mazes constructed of bizarre materials.

Wandering monsters haunt mazes, constantly seeking meals and attacking all who enter. Sometimes the dungeon's builder introduces such creatures deliberately for defense or sanitation; a gelatinous cube is the classic example.

MUSEUM

Many creatures set aside space for the display of valuable artwork, religious tokens, or trophies from previous conquests. These rooms might serve to impress visitors, intimidate captives, or tell a specific story or legend. Sometimes a museum is a single chamber imbued with a powerful illusion that replays images of scenes, battles, and important events.

The museums of civilized creatures hold important art, historical records, or trophies, well protected and displayed. Truly valuable objects are warded or encased to prevent theft. The displays of more brutish beings might simply be piles of severed heads, captured weapons and armor, and other tokens of military conquest. Aberrant beings value objects that might make little sense to a visitor, such as patches of flesh, the shattered remnants of a vase, or an ever-changing light display.

A tomb is often a memoriam or history of those interred within, containing personal effects, paintings or sculptures of the deceased, and records of their life. Sometimes it holds a sacred weapon or the key to defeating a powerful nemesis.

A museum in a dungeon might instead be a sort of zoo, with creatures or plants on display in cages. The cages might be rigged to open at certain times for feeding, or to release their occupants against intruders.

PRISON

Captives must be kept in a secure location to prevent them from causing trouble or escaping. Many dungeons contain or are themselves prisons, anything from a single deep pit to a bank of cells to a fortified stronghold staffed by armed guards. Security measures range from a simple wooden bar over a door to a complex series of magical wards. Enclosures might also be constructed from special materials such as cold iron or adamantine, or use force effects or *dimensional anchor* spells to prevent extradimensional escape. Some might even use extradimensional spaces or magical stasis to store dangerous prisoners.

Sometimes a prison is a short-term holding area. Captives are quickly executed, sacrificed, or eaten, depending on the nature of the captors. Other prisons are oubliettes filled with decayed, shackled corpses. A death trap dungeon is built to imprison and dispose of those unlucky enough to land within. It might include one-way teleporters or fiendish devices to torment and ultimately destroy its charges.

Weird prisons take strange forms. A winter mage might encase captives in blocks of solid ice, while a medusa lord turns "guests" to stone. Truly powerful creatures might trap captives inside paintings, mirrors, or even demiplanes.

TEMPLE

From simple shrines to massive cathedrals, temples exist in most dungeon environments. Their importance varies, depending on the dedication of the inhabitants. Worship-themed dungeons place the temple literally and figuratively at their center, and inhabitants are required to pay tribute regularly. Some temples serve cults or superstitious rituals, often featuring idols and bloodstained altars. In the living areas of the common folk, simple household altars or "roadside" shrines suffice for a quick offering or supplication.

Some dungeons dedicated to a deity use its power for defense. Their rooms might contain bound outsiders or other minions in addition to powerful divine magic. Idols or statues animate with divine wrath to punish intruders or to set traps in motion.

THRONE ROOM

A leader needs a place to speak with subjects, visitors, and dignitaries. Throne rooms are designed to impress and intimidate those speaking to power, so that the leader literally looks down at visitors. They are rarely trapped but are staffed by elite, well-equipped guards and have other protections. Instead of serving a single leader, a throne room might instead be the deliberation chamber of a parliament or council, which speaks and makes decisions as a group.

Throne rooms of the wealthy and powerful spare no expense on decor, with carvings, paintings, tapestries, and rugs decorating them. The throne itself is constructed of precious metal and inset with gems, and is often infused with magic to grant the leader special powers. In general, no other chairs are provided. Some rulers stay in their throne rooms much of the time, spending the rest in their living quarters. Others might use them only for important ceremonies, preferring to be on campaign. Creatures that have moved into an older complex might improvise such a room from existing features, such as a den of wererats erecting a throne in the sewers beneath a city.

Some such chambers become tombs, their occupants still sitting on the thrones from which they ruled. Conversely, some tombs are throne rooms: In its ancient hall, a powerful undead creature passes centuries plotting and brooding on its hatred for the living. The former grandeur of such rooms has decayed, and thick dust and cobwebs fill the spaces.

A throne room can also be the central trap in a dungeon built to deadly ends. The signt of an empty throne in an unattended hall should thrill or strike terror into any adventurer. Sitting on it might invite a disastrous curse, open up a secret passageway, or lead to a revelation.

In some cases, the throne itself grants the right to rule. Anyone who sits on the throne is considered to be the new leader, but only a deserving person can do so without dreadful repercussions. Or the current monarch tries to keep anyone from claiming her domain by remaining constantly in the literal seat of her power.

Show of Authority

A properly arranged and staffed throne room grants makes its owner extremely impressive to visitors. In general, a leader ensconced in an appropriate throne room receives a +2 circumstance bonus (+4 for truly spectacular settings) on Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks to influence those who understand the significance of the chamber.

VAULT

The treasures of a dungeon must be kept secure from greedy intruders and enemies. Vaults are built to serve this purpose, using the deadliest traps, the best guards, and the most powerful magic to keep trespassers at bay.

Most vaults rely on superior locks, thick walls, and sturdy doors, focusing on solid construction rather than on concealment. The entire chamber might be lined with adamantine, be protected against incorporeal thieves with walls of force, and be filled with magical protections against those who attempt teleportation. The chambers of the honored dead frequently contain great treasures, and these uninhabited dungeons are filled with traps and guardians. Undead beings might use a crypt-vault to store a crucial possession, such as a lich's phylactery or a vampire's coffin.

Other kinds of vaults rely more on concealment than physical security. They or their contents might be hidden behind tapestries, beneath plain-looking floors, or in a pocket plane. They can be disguised with illusion or even rendered invisible. A vault might even move around within the dungeon.

An entire dungeon might exist for the sole purpose of protecting its charge. The treasure chamber itself is found at the deepest or most central part of the complex, and it gives up its contents only to those who can find numerous hidden keys, answer mind-bending riddles, or slay guardian monsters. Lethal spells and traps form the ultimate deterrent to would-be thieves.

Some vaults are built by and for strange creatures, and gaining access often requires their innate powers and abilities. For example, a portal made of living flesh might open only in response to an illithid's *mind blast*, or a thick steel door contains a buried locking mechanism that its beholder lord manipulates using *telekinesis*. Creatures that inhabit inhospitable environments use their own surroundings for added security, such as an aboleth keeping its treasures at the bottom of a deep underground lake.

Vaults need not be separate chambers. Frequently, a dungeon's inhabitants store their valuables in sturdy chests with good-quality locks, sometimes defended by traps, in their barracks or personal living quarters. Other creatures use magic to hide their valuables, making chests invisible, creating hollow spaces using *stone shape*, or stashing treasure in extradimensional pockets.

WASTE ROOM

Every inhabited dungeon generates waste in one form or another, requiring methods of disposal such as garbage pits, latrines, and trash chutes. While these filthy chambers offer little of interest to adventurers, they are important to the ecology of the dungeon. Where space is limited, some creatures devise ways to dispose of waste permanently or dump it outside, which can provide clues to explorers about to enter.

Civilized beings set aside areas for the purpose of waste disposal. These might be pits or water closets in closed rooms adjacent to living quarters, and more distant rooms for collecting kitchen waste and other detritus. Sometimes chutes dump waste into a larger collection area or a deeper level. Primitive inhabitants might dig a communal waste pit or simply toss garbage in rooms and halls, though they usually do not soil their beds or eating areas. Unused rooms quickly fill with trash and mounds of broken gear. Beasts and vermin leave the remnants of prey and their droppings wherever they fall.

Waste rooms might also be charnel pits and mass graves, where the disrespected dead are left to rot. The corpses of intruders often end up here, along with the bones of past meals and sacrificial victims. Wretched prisoners and slaves might fester in their own waste, amid the corpses of those who could not endure the conditions. Failed experiments, puddles of toxic sludge, and broken equipment fill the waste areas near laboratories. If left long enough, such chambers might develop a weird sort of life.

A sewer complex is almost entirely waste rooms, and mines are filled with areas where the diggers dump slag and waste rock. Sometimes a mine's waste chamber is later emptied into a larger outdoor tip.

One creature's garbage can be another's food or even treasure. A dragon might see as junk minor jewelry that it considers unworthy of a spot in its main hoard, while a medusa fills a waste room with petrified victims whose poses it deemed uninteresting. Certain creatures feed on the inhabitants' leavings, such as gelatinous cubes and otyughs, and might be kept in designated areas for that purpose.

WATER SUPPLY

Sources of water are vital to most dungeon environments. The rooms that contain water sources are frequently guarded or trapped to prevent tampering or poisoning. Other dungeons use the source of water as a trap or obstacle, knowing that intruders might be forced to rely upon it.

A water supply might be an enclosed cistern in the middle of a stronghold, or simply an underground stream, lake, or standing pool beside which the inhabitants camp. Open water can contain other creatures not under the users' control, which might necessitate patrols. More elemental dungeons could have portals directly to the Elemental Plane of Water.

In death trap dungeons, which have few if any inhabitants, water might be used as a barrier or trap. Flooded rooms, passageways, and entire levels might exist, or mechanisms set off flooding when triggered by careless explorers. Such water need not be drinkable, and it could be scalding hot or unnaturally cold.

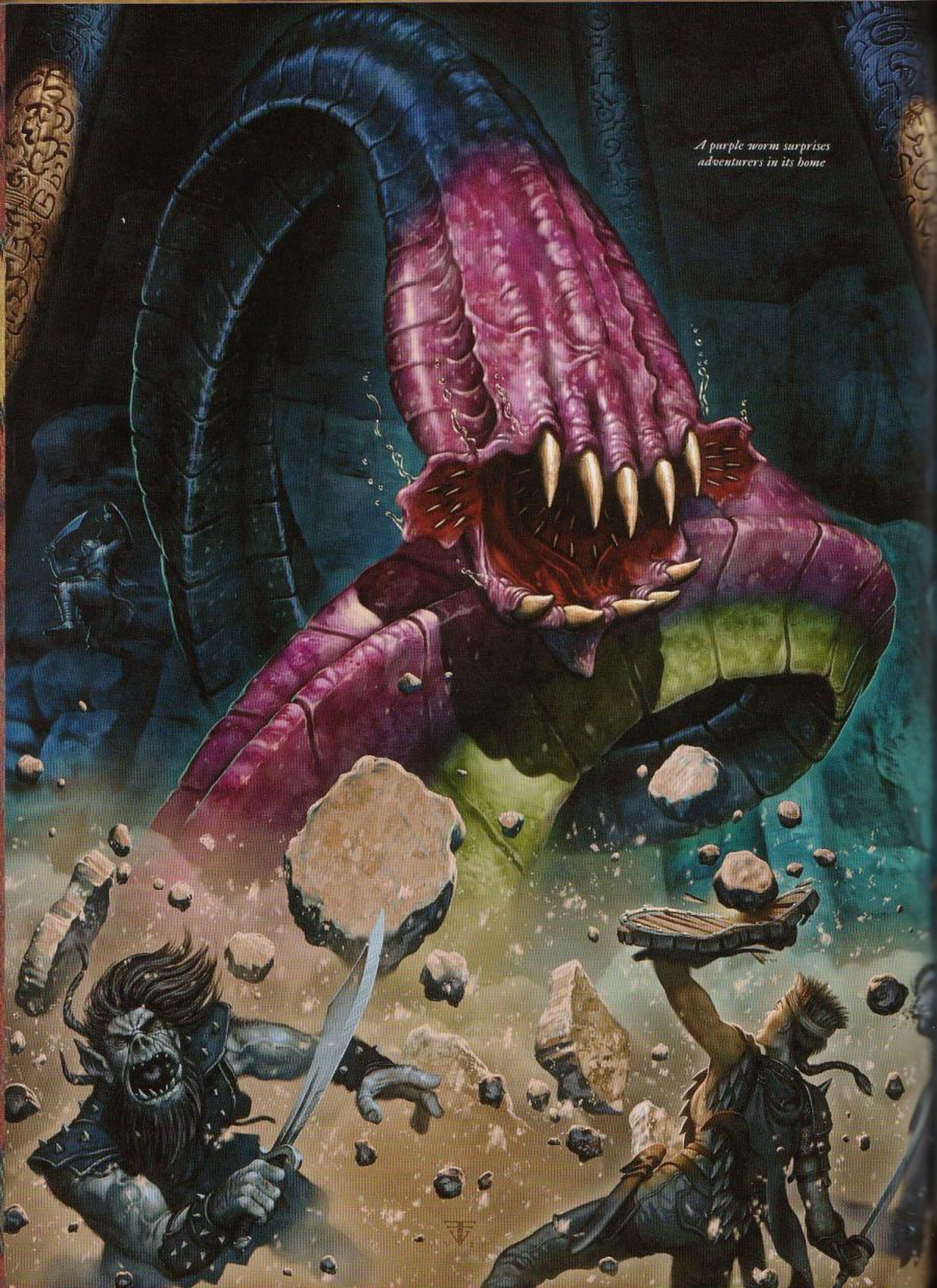
In an alien or weird dungeon, the water might not potable to humanoids, containing acid, poison, or excessive salt.

Aside from meeting a basic need, water in a dungeon can serve as a means of transportation. Explorers who fall into a dungeon stream might be swept away to other areas. Alternatively, they can sail about on rafts, boats, or the backs of aquatic creatures.

WORKSHOP

Unlike a laboratory, which is used to create strange life or construct magic items, a workshop is where creatures craft mundane items. Full of tools, raw materials, and half-finished projects, these chambers are always busy, as workers labor to meet the needs of the dungeon's other inhabitants. Characters exploring these chambers can expect to find items in various stages of completion, along with a number of finished pieces.

The workshops of a fortification produce weapons and armor, as well as day-to-day equipment for the inhabitants, such as utensils. Dungeons intended for storage



A purple worm surprises adventurers in its home might include workshops dedicated to creating its goods, whether for sale or display. Those that simply shelter a population contain the workshops of typical craftsfolk, such as leatherworkers, tailors, and blacksmiths. A crypt might also contain workshops for embalming the dead and preparing them for burial. In a mine or similar complex, the workshop is used to construct equipment or repair broken pieces.

The builders of some dungeons use undead or constructs as laborers. These tireless workers constantly produce arms and gear for their masters, or even assist in creating new undead. Sometimes, nonliving creatures build a grand device or war machine or perform repeated activities that seem nonsensical to observers but fulfill a greater plan hatched by an unknowable intelligence.

MISCELLANEOUS ROOMS

The various room types described above can be found in most dungeons, but rooms with more specialized functions might appear only in certain site, or infrequently. Often such rooms are a subtype of another room type.

Communications Center

This room might be filled with messengers hurrying in and out, or it could contain a *crystal ball*, a magic mirror, or a stranger device for long-distance communication.

Crematorium

A specialized form of waste room, this contains a furnace or a simple fire pit for disposing of corpses.

Gladiatorial Arena

This room might be a simple pit or an elaborate amphitheater. Here, warriors and beasts fight to the death for the amusement of the dungeon's inhabitants. Prisons and animal pens are attached to the main combat area, and unlucky PCs might wind up scheduled for the next day's entertainment.

Harem

A kind of living quarters, a harem keeps the many mates of the dungeon's leader secure. It is usually opulent and heavily guarded.

Keep

This chamber forms a final defense for the dungeon's inhabitants, especially in fortifications. A series of inner defenses hold back intruders, and defenders fall back to this central area only as a last resort. It is small but greatly strengthened, and it might also include retributive traps in the event of a breach.

Nursery

Much like a barracks, this room houses numerous inhabitants. The difference is that the inhabitants are juveniles, raised communally and tended to by nurses. The nursery of a royal family might be part of or adjacent to the family living quarters. Nurseries never contain combatants.

Observatory

The scholarly or outlandish owner of the dungeon uses this chamber to watch distant events, contemplate heavenly bodies, or draw meaning from the movements of trapped spirits. This room might double as a communications center (see above).

Portal

This room might contain a gateway to another plane or a teleporter to a distant realm. Alternatively, strange planar effects spill over into the room's surroundings and cause unnatural conditions.

Torture Chamber

A subset of a prison, such a room is common in the lairs of evil beings. Cruel implements of pain, suspended cages, and bloody slabs are typical features.

Training Area

Such a room is likely part of or attached to the barracks of fortified dungeons. Here warriors hone their combat skills using target dummies and practice weapons.

Trap Room

Death trap dungeons usually contain elaborate rooms designed as traps in themselves. For more about complex traps, see page 120. A few of the more typical kinds are noted here.

Chessboard: The floor has squares of alternating colors covered with life-sized game pieces. Such a trap usually involves a chess problem but might be more insidious.

Gantlet: This corridor or long, narrow chamber is filled with fiendish devices, making passage through it a virtual guarantee of death.

Separation Chamber: Filled with chutes, teleporters, and other such mechanisms, this room exists to split up party members and dump them into other hazards.

DUNGEONS IN PLAY

The best-planned dungeon can still fail if it doesn't hold up in play. This section provides some tips for more effective storytelling and adventure pacing in your dungeon.

PLAN FOR CLIMAXES

Every good story has a few pivotal scenes that bring the excitement to a peak. The hero confronts the villain. The monster chases its defenseless victim through a dark forest. The armies of good and evil meet in their final battle. In much the same way, your dungeon should have encounter areas suited for the high points of an adventure. Not every battle has to be an epic struggle that places the party at

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

the edge of defeat. But when those battles do take place, you should set the scene properly.

When building a dungeon, combine the most interesting locations with the opponents you expect to be the best or toughest encounters. A spectacular chamber filled with strange features is wasted if the PCs end a minor fight there in a few rounds. Make sure to showcase your best material.

ALLOW INFORMED CHOICES

An adventuring party comes to an intersection in a dungeon. Each passage is an identical stone hall leading into the gloom. In such a situation, the players have no information to help them decide which way to go. They might as well flip a coin. You must provide them with hints, clues, and other bits of knowledge that allow them to make a meaningful choice.

Information might be general, such as a basic direction of travel. If the PCs know which way the object of their search lies, they can follow that general heading and hope to find their destination. Such simple concepts can guide the PCs' choices for an entire session.

Alternatively, you can give the PCs information through descriptive elements. The passages near a ghoul warren stink of rotten flesh, while the stairs near a dwarf settlement show signs of recent repair and upkeep. Noisome, stale air fills one hallway, while a draft of fresh air in another suggests an exit. The PCs get a preview of what lies ahead and can make a more informed decision.

KEEP THINGS MOVING

Dungeons encourage adventurers to press ever forward. Try these simple tips for speeding up an adventure.

Character Notes: A surprise attack should catch the players, not just their characters, off guard. Asking for a Spot or Listen check alerts the players to something lurking ahead, even if their characters don't see or hear anything. In the same way, a surprise attack or a trap effect loses its punch if you have to ask the AC of the intended target. Keep notes on the PCs' key statistics, such as their Armor Class, saving throws, hit points, and so on. In particular, have important skill modifiers on hand, especially Listen, Search, and Spot, so that you can make secret checks from time to time.

Automatic Searches: Dungeon adventures can be grindingly slow if the PCs make Search checks to scour every last inch of the place. You can keep things moving along by assuming that, as experienced adventurers, the party searches as it travels unless circumstances dictate otherwise. The searching specialist (usually the rogue) simply takes 10 as the PCs explore the dungeon, which is enough to reveal basic traps, hiding places, and obstacles. But never abuse this arrangement by jacking up the Search DCs of traps and hidden items. If the players start to suspect they are missing things, their characters will just revert to frequent Search checks. Keep high-DC checks for locations where the PCs would expect important things to be well hidden—and well defended.

Alternatively, use logic in the placement of your traps (see Chapter 6 for more about trap philosophy). Just as a PC isn't likely to fill his home with pitfalls and spring-loaded arrows, so too do dungeon dwellers keep their living areas easy to get around in. Reserve traps for defending places ordinary denizens aren't likely to go, such as inside a treasure vault, or in front of defensive emplacements. The PCs won't have to waste time looking for traps in mundane locations. Springing an unexpected trap can be fun—but avoid the temptation to do it more than rarely, or constant searching will again become the default.

TREASURE

Treasure is essential to a dungeon. In a typical adventure, the PCs' enemies carry valuable gear, and heavy chests and secret vaults store coins and baubles. But other factors need to be considered.

Contemplate the PCs' current gear, preferences, and needs when placing treasure. Make sure they can find crucial items that can aid their survival, arranging such treasure in a way that makes sense and doesn't seem contrived, but still serves the aim of letting the game go on. Using treasure properly lets the players feel like their characters get a little bit better from every encounter.

Treasure can appear many forms. Nearly any furnishing can be valuable if crafted finely and inlaid with precious stones and metals. A room that grants strange abilities or an altar that makes dreams come true are treasures too—the powers they grant serve the game as if they were magic items. Chapter 7 of *Dungeon Master's Guide II* describes a number of such magical locations that could fit into a dungeon, as well as rules for creating new ones.

DUNGEON ENCOUNTERS

CHAPTER FIVE

Illus. by R. Horsley

The roar of a beast when the adventurers kick down the door. The glimmer of a serpent as it slithers through the shadows. The ghostly moans of the dead as they lurch toward fresh victims. These are the sights and sounds of the dungeon, a place that is practically synonymous with battles against fearsome monsters. In defiance of all common sense, adventurers brave dungeons in search of dangerous beasts, because pulling life from the jaws of death is what makes them heroes—or at the very least, what makes them richer.

Encounters with monsters are the cornerstone of a good dungeon. Your players expect to face off against the toughest creatures you can muster when they set foot in your dungeon, and you should not disappoint them. This chapter offers guidelines for turning even the most common of monsters into a deadly encounter, as well as a handful of new monsters and monster templates to use in your next dungeon.

WHY DUNGEONS ARE DIFFERENT

What makes a dungeon encounter different from encounters in any other setting? Three simple factors: battlefield preparation, encounter range, and direction of engagement.

BATTLEFIELD PREPARATION

In a dungeon encounter, the battlefield is relatively small and, more important, confined. Neither side can circumvent hazards easily because the walls simply will not allow it. The only option is to go over or through unfavorable terrain. Speed becomes less important than overall mobility, because foes remain within a certain distance of one another and must struggle for the best position.

Further, dungeons are not just neutral places where fights occur, but often the lairs of the monsters that are engaging in the battle. The creatures live in the dungeons and know them well, which means they have more control over the conditions. They can set traps, prepare strategies, and create obstacles to take maximum advantage of their territory. Dungeon monsters are always defending their home, one way or the other.

ENCOUNTER RANGE

In a wilderness encounter, combat can begin whenever one side becomes aware of the other. Battles between forces that are more than 100 feet apart are common, and long-range spells such as *fireball* (*PH* 231) allow engagements to begin at a distance of 600 feet. But in a dungeon, encounters begin at whatever distance the current room or corridor allows. Low ceilings can prevent adventurers and monsters from flying out of range. Furthermore, the lack of visibility limits the functional range of most encounters. Lanterns throw clear light only 30 feet and shadowy light only 60 feet, and darkvision extends farther only rarely. As a result, most dungeon encounters begin with less than 100 feet between the PCs and their enemies.

This closeness does not mean that ranged attacks are useless; it is always nice to be able to attack from afar. But melee does become far more likely, which places more of a spotlight on barbarians, monks, and other classes that might otherwise feel left out when a battle turns into a long-distance sniper fight. In addition, many melee-oriented monsters become viable threats to high-level parties, who normally might fly up and out of range to rain death from above. And as the DM, you gain more control over how the battle begins and how it can (and cannot) proceed.

Speed: Monsters that move slowly or that lack ranged attacks prefer rooms that are small enough to cross quickly. They do not want to spend 4 rounds closing the distance to the intruding PCs, all the while being targeted by spells and ranged attacks. When designing a lair, look at all the possible entrances for intruders. A single monster should have a resting spot that lies within its charge range from all possible entrances. That way, if it wakes up when adventurers enter, it can attack in the first round if it wishes. If no such resting spot exists, the lair is probably too big for the creature.

When designing a lair for multiple monsters, you can have each monster cover one entrance, with any additional monsters nesting in the center of the room. This arrangement lets most of the monsters react quickly to an incursion from any given door or hallway.

Maximum Range: While ranged attacks such as bows and javelins can be thrown a great distance, many monster special attacks have a short fixed range. Basilisks and medusas, for example, cannot petrify anyone farther than 30 feet away. Although a medusa can trade arrows with distant foes, she would much rather get up close and personal. Therefore, she should choose a lair that is less than 60 feet in length and width, so that her gaze can cover the entire room when she stands in the center. Intruders might be able to flee back down the corridor they entered, but at least they will not be able to stand in her lair and attack her openly—at least, not without closing their eyes.

DIRECTION OF ENGAGEMENT

Even if the PCs have the ability to walk through walls, they probably cannot do so for every room of a dungeon. Most of the time, therefore, dungeon occupants can control the direction from which they are attacked. This advantage is a crucial determining factor in most battles, and the primary reason so many creatures choose dungeons as strongholds. Controlling the direction of engagement means controlling the location of the intruders' front line, which allows the monsters to create safe zones for vulnerable combatants such as archers and spellcasters. Even humanoids of average Intelligence know it is a good idea to keep the enemy away from their ranged attackers.

Running the Gantlet: If the PCs need to reach a specific room to complete a task, the dungeon occupants can reduce the number of available paths to one. Then they can fill that single corridor with traps and *glyphs of warding* in an attempt to weaken the adventurers before they reach the battlefield. Even if the PCs spring just one trap, the monsters will be alerted that trouble is coming and can prepare for combat.

The Bottleneck: By creating a deliberately narrow opening into a room, dungeon occupants can limit the number of PCs who can engage at the same time. Ideally, the monsters will set up a situation in which three of them can attack a single PC in melee combat while none of the other characters can retaliate. Monsters with line breath weapons often utilize this tactic. A blue dragon might force intruders to enter through a 5-foot-wide path so that it can breathe a straight line of lightning through the entire invading party as they approach.

Cover: When monsters know what direction the PCs will come from, they know where to place cover for their archers. Barricades can turn the simplest kobold archer into a difficult target for adventuring bowmen, and an orc with a halberd hiding behind a wooden barrier will be tough to charge. Remember that dungeon occupants do not need to know anything about the PCs to use this tactic; they can simply be prepared for any intruder.

Retreat: Controlling the direction of engagement also means controlling the direction of retreat. Dungeon occupants know the directions in which the PCs might retreat, and can make plans for pursuit. They can also plan for their own retreat, setting up deterrents to throw in the path of the characters. In a dungeon, fleeing monsters can lock doors, use secret passageways, and release other creatures to slow down pursuers. Not so in wilderness encounters, in which monsters must rely on their swiftness to escape.

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Combat encounters are so closely tied to dungeons that for many jaded players, the term "dungeon crawl" is synonymous with a string of pointless battles, each taking place in an identical 20-foot by 20-foot room. It is your job to prove that preconception wrong by creating combat encounters that are challenging and memorable. Your goal should be to make each fight something special, and to give players opportunities to let their characters use special abilities or try unusual tactics. Players do not tell each other stories about the time they killed an ogre in a room. They tell stories about the time they bull rushed an ogre shaman over the edge of a cliff into a pit of lava, just as he was readying a spell.

When designing a combat encounter, consider who the opponents are, how they fight, and where the battle takes place. Each of these points is vital. Although it is clear that failing to choose monsters in advance makes for an an unsatisfying game experience as you fumble to look up creatures during play, failing to work out where and how the fight will occur can be equally disastrous. It might even be worse if you prepare insufficiently, leading to stale encounters that feel recycled from the last three dungeons.

MONSTER ROLES

The first step in designing a good dungeon combat encounter is choosing which monsters the PCs will face. This can be a difficult task, because while a monster's Challenge Rating can give you a good idea of its potential, the CR is only the tip of the iceberg. You can skim through the *Monster Manual* and other creature tomes, looking for monsters of a certain CR, but this method often leads to encounters that are straightforward and dull. Instead, try considering the roles of the combatants first, and then selecting monsters to fit those roles.

Combat roles are a way to describe a monster's specialty in battle. The roles are not inviolable, and a given monster type could fill different roles in different encounters. In particular, monsters that advance by character class can fill many different roles easily. You can also change the roles of simple humanoids by equipping them differently. If you want to design a dungeon that focuses on a single race, it is a good idea to define combat encounters first by role so that you don't end up with room after room of identical encounters.

You can also use combat roles to refine encounters with spellcasters. Rather than giving every spellcaster in a dungeon a broad list of general purpose spells, decide which role each spellcaster fulfills, and focus on spells that support him in that role. Thus, one kobold sorcerer might play an enchanter role, using *charm person* and *suggestion*, while in another encounter, a different sorcerer with the same combat statistics uses *hold person* and *web* to act as a freezer.

Here are a few brief ideas for possible roles, with a special eye toward their use in dungeons:

Ambusher: A monster that springs from hiding for one devastating attack before escaping or backing off. Ambushers rely on stealth and the ability to evade counterattack. *Examples:* A choker, a phase spider, a goblin rogue.

Archer: A monster that attacks primarily with a ranged weapon. Archers often have a high Dexterity score. Humanoid archers tend to be lightly armored, but a monster with archer abilities might have a high Armor Class. They try to stay out of melee combat and use their ranged attacks from safety. *Examples:* A manticore, a sahaugin ranger with a heavy crossbow.

Blocker: A monster that prevents movement in a specific direction, often to stop retreat through known exits. Blockers frequently hold readied actions to charge anyone who tries to escape. Stationary monsters and creatures that have reach make excellent blockers, especially if they can trip those who pass through their space. *Examples:* An assassin vine, an ogre with a halberd.

Bruiser: A strong monster that tries to crush its opponents in melee. Often bigger than other monsters of the same CR, bruisers usually fight on the front lines. *Examples:* An owlbear, a troll, an orc barbarian with a greataxe.

Buffer: A monster that enhances or heals other monsters in the same encounter, usually from a position of safety. Most monsters in this role have spellcasting ability. *Examples:* A centaur bard, a cleric.

Burner: A monster that creates a damaging effect over a wide area, usually through a spell or breath weapon. If a burner can use the ability multiple times, it tries to stay out of melee range while recharging. *Examples:* A dragon, a kobold sorcerer who has learned *fireball*.

Defender: A monster that has an unusually high Armor Class or other defensive capabilities (such as damage reduction) that deliberately positions itself near more vulnerable offensive monsters. *Examples:* An iron golem, a hobgoblin fighter in full plate armor and carrying a tower shield.

Enchanter: A monster that can take control of the enemy, if only momentarily. Enchanters often direct the PCs to take destructive actions, such as walking into known traps or dropping weapons. *Examples:* A mind flayer, a drow wizard with *suggestion* prepared.

Flanker: A fast-moving melee combatant that attempts to surround the enemy, either to gain flanking bonuses or to strike vulnerable opponents. Flankers require a means of getting past enemy front lines unscathed, such as the ability to fly or high ranks in the Tumbling skill. They tend to be tougher than ambushers, which fall easily in straight melee combat. *Examples:* A blink dog, a bugbear rogue.

Freezer: A monster that immobilizes or hampers the movement of an enemy, often so that other monsters can attack them. Monsters that prefer to grapple might fall into this category, as do those that cause paralyzation. *Examples:* A ghoul, a roper, a lizardfolk druid with *entangle* prepared.

Hoser: A monster whose special attack is not necessarily deadly, but which will hamper the PCs long after the battle ends. Such monsters are part of a cooperative effort between dungeon denizens to weaken adventurers over the course of several battles. Hosers interested in self-preservation will prepare a means to escape to use after they deliver their attack. *Examples:* A rust monster, a mummy, a tiefling cleric with *contagion* prepared.

Now that you are thinking in terms of roles, consider how to use monsters from each role in an encounter. First, choose a monster that you want to feature, and decide its role in combat. Then determine what other combat roles are needed to maximize that monster's ability to fulfill its role. Does the featured monster prefer to make ranged attacks? If so, try to keep the PCs away from it; add a few defenders to keep them occupied during the battle. Does the featured monster need to flank to gain full benefit? If so, add a bruiser that can serve as a flanking partner or direct attention away from the flanker.

THE ENCOUNTER TEMPLATE

When dungeon occupants control the battlefield, the range, and the direction of engagement, they can plan battles in advance much more carefully. They will use each of their advantages to its fullest extent against a party of invading adventurers. You can represent this planning by designing dungeon encounters with an encounter template—a set of roles and tactics that considers the available terrain and personnel to create a well-crafted and exciting encounter.

Normally, you might draw a room that has entrances and exits, place a monster or two within, and then try to come up with some tactics for the creatures. When using an encounter template, you work backward. First, choose the tactics you want to try, and then pick monster roles to support those tactics. Next, draw a diagram that indicates which role will begin the encounter and where, relative to the direction from which the PCs will enter. Next, select monsters that have the appropriate Challenge Rating and theme to fulfill your chosen roles. Finally, finish drawing the room around your diagram, adding any obstacles or terrain necessary.

This method of design has four advantages. First, you know for certain that tactics have been fully integrated into the encounter, rather than slapped on at the end. After all, the monsters were chosen specifically to carry out those tactics. Second, you can make sure the encounter has the proper Encounter Level, because you can work backward to determine the CR based on the number of combatants needed for the tactics. Third, your combat encounters will be more diverse. You can block out the templates used in each room so you do not repeat the same type of encounter too many times in a particular dungeon. Fourth, and perhaps most useful, you can reuse a template any number of times after you develop it, swapping out the monsters and redrawing the room to fit any dungeon.

Making a new encounter template is a fairly simple step-by-step process that can be repeated as many times as necessary to create a variety of exciting encounters.

EXAMPLE: HOBGOBLIN ARCHER ROOM

As you read each step, follow the extended example of a DM who uses an encounter template to construct a challenging encounter for her players.

Example: Elana is designing a small hobgoblin-themed dungeon for her group's next weekly session. She wants her players to finish most of the dungeon in one session, and based on her previous sessions with the group, she knows they won't get through more than five encounters in the amount of time set aside to play. She decides to build a dungeon with three major combat encounters, allotting the extra time to a roleplaying encounter and some traps. She also plans to include a few guard posts, each with two 1st-level hobgoblin fighters, as easy targets for the PCs.

Elana decides to use the encounter template method to build the main encounters. Her players use the same old spells and abilities too often, and she wants to challenge their expectations.

STEP 1: CHOOSE A FOCUS

For each major encounter in your dungeon, choose a monster role to serve as the focus. You can select one of the roles described above or invent your own. Try not to repeat the same focus too often in the same dungeon—or, if you do, plan to use a different template for each such room.

Start your encounter template diagram by drawing the direction from which the PCs will enter the room; right now, there is no need to be any more specific than that. Then, somewhere in what will become the room, draw a circle and label it with the role that you have chosen as your focus (such as ambusher, flanker, hoser, and so on). Place the circle either close to the entrance or far away, depending on whether you picked a melee combat role or a ranged attack role.

Example: Elana chooses to focus on archer monsters in one encounter, bruiser monsters in another, and a freezer in the third. She knows that most of the monsters will probably be hobgoblins, but she doesn't decide how many to place in each room yet. Instead, she begins with the archer room. First, Elana draws an arrow to indicate the direction from which the PCs will enter the room. Then she draws the archers at the opposite end of the paper, near the exit. To go forward and continue through the dungeon, the PCs will have to close with the archers, hopefully taking several rounds of arrows in the process.

STEP 2: COUNTER THE FOCUS

Imagine a group of generic NPC adventurers of the same level as your PCs. If you prefer, you can create a party of "playtest" adventurers with the NPCs on pages 112–127 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or the NPCs on pages 161–172 of *Dungeon Master's Guide II*.

While looking at your diagram, imagine your band of adventurers entering the room and being attacked by a monster in the focus role. Do not worry about the monster's exact identity yet. Just picture the response your generic adventurers would have. Would they charge the monster? Would they attempt to surround it and pelt it with ranged attacks? Draw the adventurers' likely path into the room as they attack the focus role monster.

Forewarning: In some cases, the monsters in an encounter will have specific information on the actual PCs in your game. For example, if the dungeon is the stronghold of a vile necromancer who has fought the characters several times (and watched them by means of a *crystal ball*), the villain has no doubt informed his minions of the party's strengths and weaknesses. In this case, you can use the actual PCs to test your encounter, designing the template around their most commonly employed tactics.

Example: Elana tries to imagine what a typical group of NPC adventurers would do if they entered the room and were set upon by archers. (She specifically avoids imagining the actual PCs in her game because the hobgoblins would have no way to prepare for the characters' tactics in advance.) She pictures the generic NPC fighter immediately charging the archers, forcing them into melee. The fighter occupies some of the archers, keeping them from making ranged attacks, and because Elana placed them at the far end of the room, they can't back up to fire. Denied their ranged attacks, the archers would fall quickly. She draws a line to represent the path the fighter would take.

STEP 3: DEFEND THE FOCUS

Now that you know what your NPC adventurers will do, add at least two elements to the room to prevent that action or to lessen its impact. If you imagined your monster being charged, think of ways to keep melee warriors away from it. If you pictured the combatants trading ranged shots from a distance, think of ways to interfere with the PCs' ranged attacks.

Consider adding any of the following elements to defend the focus role monster.

Secondary Role Monsters: Choose another monster role from the list (or create one on the spot) that will prevent your focus role monster from being defeated, and place it somewhere in the room. Often, this will be one or more defenders or bruisers that will engage the PCs to keep them from attacking the focus role monster. On the other hand, if your focus role monster is already prepared for melee combat, you might fill the secondary role with freezers or enchanters. Regardless, add the secondary role monsters to your diagram wherever they would be the most effective. Draw them so that they intercept the line that shows the NPC party's path into the room. You might have the new monsters start next to the line, or move there after a round or two to cut off escape.

A Divided Focus: Dividing the focus role into several smaller groups can keep it from being wiped out by area attacks. The split can also hamper attempts to engage in melee, since a PC fighter can charge only one group at a time.

Hazards: These are areas that are dangerous to enter, such as spiked pits or lava flows. They block enemy movement while opening up a range of tactics for monsters, which can try to bull rush or enchant their foes into the hazards.

Obstacles: Not only do obstacles provide cover from ranged attacks, they also slow advancing foes. Obstacles that can be crossed (such as a table, a low wall, or a horizontal sarcophagus) should be marked differently from those that cannot (such as a jutting wall, a column, or a vertical sarcophagus). Later, you can describe exactly what these obstacles are to add flavor and ambience to the room.

Terrain: Try impeding the PCs with difficult terrain. Creatures cannot run or charge across the terrain, but arrows and spells cross it easily. This element can be a nice advantage for archers or enchanters and helps to keep them safe from enemy fighters for a few rounds longer.

Example: Elana makes three changes to her diagram. First, she splits the archers into two groups, so that if one group is engaged, the other group can still fire. Second, she adds a pair of obstacles between the entrance and the archers. She will decide what the obstacles are later; for now, she merely notes that they will prevent the archers from being charged. Third, she adds difficult terrain in front of the exit to keep the adventurers from running through the room quickly.

STEP 4: REPEAT STEPS 2 AND 3

With your room now loaded with potential defenses for your focus monster, send your imaginary NPCs back in, this time thinking about their likely reaction to each of the new features. If one course of action becomes painfully obvious as the only likely scenario, try adding (or removing) features and sending the NPCs in again. If the room features a large cluster of monsters in one place, for example, the adventurers will almost certainly cast an area-effect spell. Your goal is to find a set of parameters that leaves no clear course of action, so that many different tactics on the part of the PCs are equally valid.

When you are satisfied that there is no single easy way to overcome your encounter, you are ready to proceed. At this point, the template is completed. In steps 5 through 8, you will adapt the template to the exact needs of your current dungeon.

Retreat: If the PCs can back out of the room and regroup, they might come up with an improvised strategy that will defeat your carefully planned encounter. If your monsters are smart enough, try finding a means to hamper retreat once the battle is joined. Monsters that lurk near the entrance can move to block it, or the door might be rigged to slam shut automatically.

Going too Far: Beware of making a room so formidable that the only outcome is death. Your dungeon occupants want to kill the PCs, but you, as the DM, do not. As a rule of thumb, avoid placing more than three monster roles and three other elements (such as terrain areas, obstacles, or hazards) in an encounter. If you overload the encounter, it will be too difficult not only for the PCs but also for you, because you will have too many special rules to work into the action.

Example: This time, Elana imagines her generic adventurers entering the room and being attacked by two bands of archers, each protected by some sort of obstacle. She pictures the NPCs backing out of the room, trading long-range shots with the protected archers until they can regroup. Elana decides that the archers need an ally to pin the NPCs down when they enter, keeping them in place while the archers turn them into pincushions. She considers using a freezer, but she's already blocked in a freezer fight for later in the dungeon. Instead, she draws a pair of flankers on her room diagram, one on each side of the entrance. These monsters will hide until the NPCs enter the room, at which time the flankers will jump out and keep the party engaged. The archers will then be free to pick off the NPCs while they fight the flankers.

Elana imagines the whole scene again. After the party enters the room, the archers jump up from behind the obstacles and shoot at the intruders. The NPCs try to back out of the room, only to find two more monsters behind them, blocking the door. She can imagine several scenarios from this point, but none of them is immediately apparent or will nullify the threat of the archers, so she considers her template finished.

STEP 5:
CHOOSE CHALLENGE RATINGS

By now, you should have a diagram that includes one to three different monster roles. The next step is to turn those roles into actual monsters. You will need at least one monster for every group drawn, though some groups might turn into two or three creatures.

Consult Table 3–1: Encounter Numbers on page 49 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Look down the left side and find the row that corresponds to the Encounter Level

TEN REASONS ENCOUNTERS GET TRASHED

It happens to every DM at one point or another. You spend hours writing the statistics block for the most complicated villain you have ever created, and he gets crushed by the PCs in 2 rounds. What went wrong? Most likely, you made one of these ten common mistakes.

1. Poor Will Save: A bad Will saving throw is a monster's Achilles heel. Many of the spells that force a Will save in the first place—such as *sleep, hold person, charm monster, dominate person*, and so on—can end an encounter. If your monster looks like a big dumb brute, chances are the PCs are going to cast a spell that forces a Will save. Two levels in a class that has a high Will save can help, but for monsters that advance by Hit Dice, a spell that enhances saving throws in general might be a more realistic option.

2. Poor Fortitude Save: If your monster looks like a spellcasting mastermind, the PCs will go right for the spells that force a Fortitude save, such as *baleful polymorph, finger of death*, or *disintegrate*. Give the monster two levels of a warrior class to grant it a +3 bonus on its Fortitude saves.

3. Low Armor Class: Many monsters in the *Monster Manual* have a dangerously low AC for their level, especially big creatures such as giants. Shore up their defenses by giving them better armor than what is listed, and consider enhancing them further with spells or magic items. Remember to have them take cover during the fight, too.

4. Direct Path: Wizards, sorcerers, and psions can be powerful combatants—as long as no one is swinging an axe in their face. Never let a physically weak spellcaster start an encounter in any location that has a clear path from that spot to the room's entrance. The party fighter will charge straight toward him, declare a Power Attack, and possibly roll a lucky critical hit to lop your feared villain's head clean off. Put terrain and obstacles in the way to slow the PCs down.

5. No Real Threat: In a good encounter, all enemy combatants pose a threat to the party. If one foe is a powerful necromancer and the rest are skeletons that have only 1 Hit Die, the PCs will ignore the minions and focus their attacks on the boss. And then the boss will die. A villain's minions should appear strong enough to force the PCs to split their attacks.

6. The 200-Foot Cliff: If you're running an encounter in which the villain stands 5 feet in front of a dramatic cliff, you might as well paint the words "Bull rush me!" on his forehead and be done with it.

7. No Ranged Attack: Although a monster can control the range of engagement in a dungeon, it needs a ranged attack to avoid becoming a pincushion for the PCs' arrows. If your villain does not have a ranged weapon, he should have archers or spellcasters backing him up.

8. Poor Use of Abilities: Make sure the monster can use all its feats and special abilities together, and that they mesh with the tactics planned for the fight. For example, a creature that has sneak attack should not attack the PCs from 150 feet away.

9. Advance Knowledge: If the PCs know everything about a fight before it happens (perhaps by using powerful divinations), they will be able to counter almost any tactic. Hold something back to keep the battle exciting. Mighty wizards often detect such divinations anyway, and they might change their plans as a result.

10. Lucky Adventurers: Sometimes, the PCs simply get the better of your villain. Your monster might roll a natural 1 on its Fortitude save to avoid a *slay living* spell in the surprise round. Get over it, and prepare for the next encounter. The experience will make you a better DM.

you want for your PCs. Most of the time, the Encounter Level should equal their average character level, but if the party has more than four members (or if you want to plan a difficult fight), you can choose a higher EL. Run your finger across the row until you reach the column that represents the number of groups drawn on your diagram. The number you find is the Challenge Rating for each group. If you want a group to consist of two or more monsters, use that CR as the new Encounter Level for the group, and add enough monsters with lower CRs to form a group of that strength. You can also use the "Mixed Pair" column to help you find an appropriate mix of monsters.

Example: Now that Elana has her encounter template, she needs to pick monsters to place in it. Hobgoblins are the obvious choice, but how many are needed? Her players are 6th level, but the party has six members, so Elana decides that she wants an Encounter Level of 7. She also knows she needs at least four monsters: two archers and two flankers. So she consults Table 3–1: Encounter Numbers in the *DMG*, finds "7" in the Encounter Level column, and moves across to the column that corresponds to four monsters. The entry says "3," meaning that to make an encounter that uses four monsters and has a total EL of 7, each monster must have a CR of 3.

However, Elana decides that four 3rd-level hobgoblins are not enough of a threat. She thinks the PCs would defeat them too easily. So she follows the same row over to the Mixed Pair column, and sees "6+4." She decides to make the two flankers EL 6 and the two groups of archers EL 4 together. Checking the Encounter Numbers table again, she sees this allows her to have two flankers at CR 4 and three archers at CR 2. That sounds good, but she feels like being symmetrical and tosses in a fourth archer, deciding that this will be one of the more challenging battles of the day.

STEP 6: CHOOSE MONSTERS

With your Challenge Ratings in place, it is finally time to open your *Monster Manual*, *Fiend Folio*, *Monster Manual II*, or other favorite book of creatures. Turn to the list of monsters ranked by CR that appears in the back of every D&D monster book, and find monsters that match your target CRs to fill your needed roles. However, keep your dungeon's theme in mind, too. If you cannot find a monster that fits your theme at the proper level, look for monsters that have a lower CR and advance them. In many cases, adding class levels can radically transform a monster into whatever you need. A bugbear might make a natural flanker, for example, but a bugbear that has a few cleric levels is a great buffer or freezer.

After selecting your monsters (and possibly giving them class levels or extra Hit Dice), you can work out their full game statistics. Consider swapping some of their feats or spells for others that are more suited to the monsters' roles. Remember to give them proper equipment as well, within the bounds of their proficiencies and probable budget.

Traps: You can substitute a trap of a certain CR for any monster group. Although traps usually cannot move, they make excellent blockers. Consider using the encounter trap rules (see page 120) to keep the trap continually active during the fight and to give the party rogue a definite goal in the encounter.

Example: Elana looks through the *Monster Manual*. Hobgoblin warriors have a CR of only 1/2, so she knows she'll want to give them class levels. She decides that each flanker will be a 1st-level fighter 1/3rd-level rogue, which gives them a sneak attack that deals 2d6 points of damage. With luck, the flankers will make a sneak attack on the PCs when they jump from the shadows, and perhaps make more if they can flank the same adventurer. She arms both flankers with chain shirts, light shields, and longswords, all masterwork. Next, Elana decides to make each archer a 2nd-level rogue so that they get the evasion class feature—otherwise, a single fireball might finish them all. She arms them with shortbows (since they're not proficient with anything better) and leather armor. When writing their statistics, she focuses on maximizing each hobgoblin's Hide and Move Silently skills, allowing them to remain undetected until the right moment.

STEP 7: DRAW THE ROOM

Your diagram now has the monsters in place, so it is time to draw the room around them. You should have a fairly good idea of how the battle will take place if everything goes the monsters' way. Draw your room with whatever hiding places or exits you feel will enhance the encounter. Make sure to draw in any obstacles, terrain, or hazards you decided on earlier.

Finally, decide the scale of the room. Although your diagram might be mostly square, nothing requires you to keep that shape. Further, examine the ranges and movement rates of the monsters you have chosen. Melee monsters should be able to reach their targets quickly, and ranged attackers should be able to fire with little penalty. Monsters that have special abilities must be in range of the PCs' front line in order to bring those powers to bear.

Bigger Is Better: When drawing a room, err on the side of giving the monsters and the PCs too much space so they will have multiple ways to maneuver. A wide room makes it possible for a fast monster to move around the party and attack a spellcaster, while the party's monk or barbarian can pull the same trick to attack the monsters' back ranks.

Unexpected Avenues: Secret doors, monsters that emerge from a nearby chamber, and other surprises make an encounter more interesting. When you draw your room, look at the other portions of the dungeon nearby and think about how they might interact. Even though you do not want to overwhelm the party with monsters, the sudden appearance of reinforcements or the arrival of a tough monster makes for an interesting encounter.

Areas of Advantage: Consider adding a few spaces that confer an advantage to whomever stands there. The most common area would be a raised platform (such as a dais) that allows melee attackers to gain a +1 bonus for higher ground. Lines of columns create areas of cover for either side. Hazards such as spiked pits can also serve this purpose; adventurers often try to push monsters into their own traps. A PC might push over a teetering statue, crushing the monsters beside it. A chain that hangs from the ceiling could allow a character to swing over a pit and across the room.

Your goal is to create opportunities for the PCs to seize location-based advantages so that they feel encouraged to try new things in combat. The more they move around and explore different strategies, the more likely it is that a given combat encounter will transcend everyday hack and slash.

Example: With her monsters written up and her template ready, Elana puts the final encounter together. She places her monsters according to their roles, and then draws a rectangular room around them. She sees that her flankers are just standing in plain view, so she gives them hiding niches behind the entrance. She decides that the obstacle between the PCs and her archers will be a raised platform; the archers will hide behind its railing, and step up to shoot while retaining some cover.

Looking at her drawing, Elana thinks it resembles a temple of some sort, so she decides on the spot that it is. She sketches the layout of a shrine, with raised niches for statues lining the long side walls. (The hobgoblins destroyed the statues near the entrance so those niches could serve as hiding spots.) She adds entrances to the archers' platforms, turning them into raised balconies. That should keep them from being charged!

Now Elana needs to determine the scale. The room feels like it should be large, but if it's too big, the archers won't get much benefit from their sneak attack. She makes the room 60 feet long, big enough so that the archers will have to hold their sneak attack until the party is 30 feet in the door. This length also gives the flankers some fighting room when they drop down from the niches. The width doesn't matter so much to Elana, so she makes it 40 feet to give the room a pleasing shape. She sets the ceiling at 20 feet tall, high enough for the flankers' hiding niches to be above the doorframe.

Finally, Elana adds a set of four support braces to the room, spaced around the long side walls. The bracers appear to be architectural elements, but they're actually meant to provide cover against the archers for any PCs smart enough to take it. The flankers will have specific orders to drive the adventurers out of such hiding places, though, which should keep things interesting.

Elana's encounter is ready to go!

STEP 8: RECYCLE YOUR TEMPLATE

Everything you wrote in steps 1 through 4 was independent of level or theme. Later in the campaign (or in your next campaign), you can reuse that template to create a different encounter with the same solid tactics, but with different monsters, different terrain features, and different themes—and with half the work. As you draw encounter template diagrams, consider saving them in a notebook. By the time you have created five or six full dungeons, you will have collected dozens of encounter templates, each ready for new monsters, obstacles, and room descriptions. With practice, you will be able to pull templates from your notes on the fly during a game session, in case your players decide to explore a random cave that you did not prepare in advance.

Example: A few months later, Elana is creating a new dungeon, but the PCs are now 10th level and she wants a much tougher challenge for them. Pressed for time, she digs out the encounter template for the hobgoblin archer room. She replaces each archer group with a medusa, and splits four grimlocks (each a 2nd-level barbarian) into the two groups of flankers. The obstacle in front of the archers becomes a row of stalagmites; Elana thinks that medusas on balconies would be a little too tough. She also forgoes the niches for the flankers, since grimlocks have a high bonus on Hide checks in underground terrain and don't really need any help. When drawing the room, she makes it rounder—more of a natural cavern than a constructed chamber—and she places a few petrified adventurers around the room instead of the evenly spaced columns of the shrine. In only a few minutes, she has created a different encounter that still has a solid tactical underpinning and is unlikely to be recognized as springing from the humble hobgoblin dungeon of days gone by.

STOCK ENCOUNTER TEMPLATES

Presented below are four encounter templates designed around certain monster roles. Each template includes three encounters of varying Encounter Levels. In each template, one encounter has been fully developed and can be used as is in your next dungeon. The other two encounters are left for you to develop as needed.

ENCHANTER ENCOUNTER (EL 12)

Focus: An enchanter tries to control the PCs into attacking each other or falling into hazards.

The Enchanter: Any monster that can control other creatures is usable here, though you should consider what sort of control it exerts. A monster that causes *fear* is a viable choice, but you should place any hazards behind the point where the *fear* takes effect, so that fleeing PCs run directly into them.

Sample: A mind flayer (enchanter, CR 8) lurks behind the curtain at the rear of the room. During the battle, it peeks out and uses its *charm monster* spell-like ability to turn the PCs against one another. Ideally, the mind flyer will *charm* only the PCs who have not already fallen victim to an umber hulk's *confusion* gaze. Enemies that come within 60 feet of the mind flyer are targeted by its *mind blast*.

The Blockers: A large group of blockers keeps the PCs occupied while the enchanter does its thing. They should be able to prevent most of the PCs from advancing past them, and they might try to push the adventurers into the hazards.

Sample: Three umber hulks (bruisers, CR 7) lair in the room. When intruders enter, they howl and attack, keeping the foes tied up in the middle of the chamber. Their gaze attack might blur the line between who is *charmed* and who is not—the PCs might believe that *charmed* allies are merely *confused*. These particular umber hulks have the Combat Reflexes feat in place of Toughness, so they can strike fleeing foes more easily.

The Defender: In case anyone gets past the blockers, a defender group stands in front of the enchanter.

Sample: A *charmed* dwarf knight (dwarf fighter 8, CR 8), armed with a *+1 halberd* and a *ring of protection +1* instead of a shield, stays behind the curtain with the mind flayer. He keeps attackers at bay with his reach weapon. If the *charm* is dispelled, the dwarf turns on his "master" and helps the PCs kill the mind flayer.

The Room: For best effect, place hazards such as spiked pits or acid pools around the room. If the enchanter causes *fear*, place an obstacle in the entrance to the room to catch fleeing PCs. The enchanter might use cover or concealment to avoid being targeted by spells, but cover will not do much for the PCs. The room should be almost as long as the enchanter's longest-range effect, so that it can stay far away from the characters while targeting them.

Sample: This room features an ancient pit trap that has long since ceased to function as a trap. However, it still serves as a pit, and PCs who fall in (or are pushed in) take 3d6 points of falling damage from the 30-foot drop. Steep stairs lead up to the room's exit, which is covered by a threadbare purple curtain. The curtain is just enough to grant concealment to the mind flayer and its *charmed* bodyguard. The dark room has only whatever illumination the PCs bring with them.

EL 5 Variation: Orc shaman (enchanter; cleric 2 [Evil, Strength domains] with *cause fear* [×2], *command*, *enlarge person* prepared; CR 2), three orc marauders (blockers, barbarian 1, CR 1), and one orc soldier (defender, fighter 1 with tower shield and battleaxe, CR 1). The enchanter tries to use *cause fear* and *command* to get PCs to run past the blockers, thus provoking attacks of opportunity.

EL 21 Variation: Balor (enchanter, CR 20), nine vrocks (blockers, CR 9), and one marilith (defender, CR 17). The balor hangs at the back of a cavernous room, using its *dominate monster* spell-like ability to seize control of foes. The flock of vrocks interferes with spellcasting PCs while the marilith uses *blade barrier* to keep melee warriors away from the balor.

FREEZER ENCOUNTER (EL 6)

Focus: A freezer tries to pin down as many PCs as possible while bruisers pound them into the floor.

The Freezer: Because you are working with melee-oriented bruisers, keep your freezers out of the fray. Look for monsters that can paralyze or entangle from a distance, or choose spellcasters that have similarly appropriate spells.

Sample: A troglodyte shaman (freezer, troglodyte druid 1 with *entangle* prepared, CR 2) hiding on a ledge above the area casts *entangle* when the PCs are near the bruisers. The plants spring to life and hold the PCs in place while the druid either attacks with javelins or retreats to safety.

The Bruisers: Their job is simple: smash anything that gets rooted to the ground. They have nothing against a coup de grace if it becomes available, but mostly, the bruisers will be facing opponents who cannot change position. If possible, choose bruisers that have reach so they can attack rooted PCs who cannot retaliate.

Sample: Four troglodyte bodyguards (bruisers, troglodyte fighter 1 with spiked chain, CR 6) stand on ledges above the vine-strewn area, out of the range of the grasping plants. They strike down at trapped PCs within their 10-foot reach, knowing they are safe from normal melee attacks. Their stench ability makes it harder for the PCs to fight back or escape entanglement.

The Room: Give the freezer whatever protection it can get from obstacles. If its special attack is based on area, make the room fairly narrow to force the PCs to clump together. Once most of the adventurers are frozen, the freezer needs a path for retreat so the bruisers can do their job.

Sample: This specially devised ambush point features ledges that are 5 feet off the ground, keeping the troglodytes out of the *entangle* spell while giving them a +1 bonus on their attack rolls. The trogs blend in well with the stone walls of the corridor, making it easy for them to hide. The floor is covered with vines that grow underground. If the PCs escape the area of entanglement, a nearby boulder could provide them with cover against the shaman's javelin attacks—or an easy way up to the ledge itself.

EL 9 Variation: Three half-fiend ettercaps (freezers, CR 5) and three fiendish Large monstrous spiders (bruisers, CR 3). The room is filled with webbing, including a number of the ettercaps' web traps. When a PC becomes stuck in a web, the spiders attack from their hiding spots. The ettercaps stay near the ceiling, throwing webs to snare foes for their pets to poison. If necessary, the ettercaps use their spell-like ability to blanket the room in *darkness*, relying on their ability to pinpoint victims caught in their webs.

EL 12 Variation: Four cloakers (freezers, CR 5) and six cloakers (bruisers, CR 5). In this example, the same kind of creature fulfills two different roles. Four cloakers (the freezers) hang back and use their moan special ability; one uses the *unnerve* moan, while the other three use the *stupor* moan. The other six cloakers (the bruisers) use *dancing images* to fill the area with illusory duplicates and then attack, making it hard to tell which cloakers are real. The attacking cloakers try to engulf any PCs who resist the moans of their compatriots. Since the cloakers float, they attack in an area that has difficult terrain so that their victims cannot charge or flee.

HOSER ENCOUNTER (EL 8)

Focus: While freezers keep the PCs in place, hosers attack to reduce their effectiveness.

The Hosers: The hosers spring from the walls, beginning the encounter already in melee range for maximum effectiveness. Choose monsters whose effects are difficult to reverse for a period of time. Ability score damage, energy drain, equipment destruction, and curses are good options. In this particular encounter, the hosers are considered expendable by the dungeon owners.

Sample: Four shadows (hosers, CR 3) pass through the walls suddenly to ambush the PCs. They focus their attacks on adventurers wearing heavy armor, ordered by their master to reduce the strength of the party's warriors. The shadows are easily replaced and have been commanded to fight until destroyed.

The Freezers: Their only job is to make sure the PCs cannot flee from the hosers. Once they accomplish this goal, the freezers retreat to safety. (Alternatively, they too might be expendable.)

Sample: A pair of ghasts (freezers, CR 3) enters the corridor ahead of the PCs. Rather than concentrating on one foe each, they split their attacks among several adventurers, hoping to paralyze as many as possible. With luck, the stench will sicken the PCs, imposing a penalty on their saves against paralysis, and weakening their ability to fight the shadows. On the off chance that the ghasts manage to paralyze the entire party, they simply devour the victims, but it is more likely that the ghasts flee after several rounds.

The Room: Make the battlefield as narrow as possible to allow the hosers to get into melee range immediately and stay there. The hosers' master does not care if they survive. Their only task is to deal as much damage as possible before being vanquished. Obstacles that hamper escape help the hosers meet that goal.

Sample: The battle takes place in a corridor, just before a turn where the ghasts lurk until ready. The shadows, being incorporeal, hide in the walls until they hear the sound of footsteps. The area is also under the effects of a *desecrate* spell, making it harder to turn the undead attackers.

EL 5 Variation: Two rust monsters (hosers, CR 3) and two portcullis traps (freezers, CR 1, *DMG* 71). In this case, the portcullises are made of wood rather than iron. The two traps are 40 feet apart, with a linked trigger at the midway point. When the traps are sprung, hidden wall panels open to release the hungry rust monsters.

EL 10 Variation: Eight magmins (hosers, CR 3) and two rasts (freezers, CR 5). In this scenario, the magmins do not realize they are expendable. A greater power has convinced them to attack the PCs, expecting the magmins to be killed but hoping they will melt a few weapons in the process. The rasts seek to paralyze the adventurers with their gaze, and perhaps drain some blood before fleeing. The ambush takes place in a corridor with walls made of fire (see page 21), which the magmin and the rasts spring through unscathed when the moment is right.

BURNER ENCOUNTER (EL 14)

Focus: A pair of burners located far from the battle rains destruction down on the area. Meanwhile, a group of flankers pins the PCs down.

The Burners: These monsters should be as far away from the encounter as their range allows, preferably behind several obstacles or hazards.

Sample: Two kobold sorcerers (burners, kobold sorcerer 10 that knows *fireball*, CR 10) stand far away from the bridge in darkness, watching for light sources that enter the room. Because the sorcerers are so distant, the *fireballs* they throw at intruders seem to come from the darkness.

The Flankers: The job of the flankers is to keep the PCs stationary while the burners let loose. To accomplish this task, the flankers must not be harmed by the burners' area effect, either by virtue of energy resistance, evasion, or some other immunity.

Sample: Three half-dragon kobold brothers (flankers, half-dragon (red) kobold rogue 5, CR 7) hide beneath the bridge, waiting for the first *fireball* to detonate. When it does, they fly up and attack, first with sneak attacks and then with their own breath weapons. If the fight turns against them, they fly away.

The Room: The room should be large enough for the burners to stand near the edge of their maximum range. Anything that keeps the PCs away from the burners is a good addition to this encounter, as is any feature that clumps the adventurers together in a relatively small area.

Sample: This room is a massive natural cavern spanned by a stone bridge. Anyone who steps off or falls off the bridge plunges more than 200 feet to the ground below. The flankers will not hesitate to bull rush characters who appear to have immunity to fire. The sorcerers stand on a distant ledge more than 500 feet away, shrouded in darkness.

EL 11 Variation: A bored ghost (flanker, ghost [human] rogue 6, CR 8) haunts the lair of two destrachans (burners, CR 8). The ghost enjoys watching the beasts kill living beings and alerts them when it sees intruders. The destrachans immediately unleash a double blast of sonic fury, which has no effect on the ghost because it lacks flesh and nerves. Meanwhile, the ghost makes incorporeal sneak attacks on the PCs, hoping to keep them busy while the destrechans continue to use their destructive harmonics.

EL 11 Variation: Two young adult white dragons (burners, CR 8) and three winter wolves (flankers, CR 5). The battle takes place in a frozen room with ice walls and an ice ceiling 40 feet high. The white dragons cling to the ceiling, perhaps filling the room with a *fog cloud* to keep from being seen prematurely. The winter wolves attack first, drawing the PCs out into the room so that both dragons can use their breath weapons. The wolves attempt to trip PCs to keep them from running and will use their own breath weapons if needed.

ALTERNATIVE MONSTER FEATS

The chimera. The hydra. The umber hulk. In many dungeons, the primary foes are monsters—creatures of great power that lair deep in the earth, guarding mounds of ancient treasure. Classic monsters are among the key archetypes of the game, providing a sense of excitement and trepidation when the PCs open a door and come face to face with one.

But most classic dungeon monsters in the *Monster Manual* are not as versatile as their humanoid counterparts. They cannot advance by class level, they cannot change their weapons or spells, and they have limited ability to alter their environment. Many such beasts are not smart enough to change the tactics bred into them by their predatory nature. How, then, do you create a challenging and unique encounter with a classic dungeon monster?

One quick and easy method is to change their default feat selection. Because feats are more or less equal in power, swapping out one or two can significantly alter the play experience without increasing the monster's Challenge Rating. The change also might shake up jaded players who think they know what every critter in the book can do. Dungeon builders are always experimenting with new breeds and new training techniques, so it is easy to justify any combination of feats you can imagine.

An important note, though: Most of the creatures in the *Monster Manual* have static feats, which grant flat bonuses on specific rolls and have been worked into the monsters' statistics in advance. If you decide to switch a monster's feats, make sure you remove the effects of the old feat from its description. Furthermore, avoid giving monsters more than one or two feats that require a special action on their part. Giving a monster the Improved Sunder feat is nasty, but giving it Improved Sunder and Improved Disarm is redundant—it will be able to use only one at a time.

Presented below are ten classic dungeon monsters from the *Monster Manual*, with suggestions for substitute feats.

BASILISK

Default Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude.

Alternative Feats: Ability Focus, Improved Initiative.

If you put a basilisk in your dungeon, you're hoping it turns some player characters to stone, not bites them to death. Why not give it Ability Focus (petrifying gaze) instead of Blind-Fight to increase the DC of saves made to avoid its gaze attack to 15? Improved Initiative instead of Great Fortitude lets it petrify the PCs before they act, and you have a much meaner dungeon monster on your hands.

CARRION CRAWLER

Default Feats: Alertness^{B}, Combat Reflexes, Track.

Alternative Feats: Ability Focus, Hold the Line, Weapon Focus.

Alertness is a bonus feat, so you cannot swap it out, but you can get rid of the other default feats. Without a reach of 10 or more feet, a carrion crawler is unlikely to get many attacks of opportunity, and as a scavenger, it often has little use for Track. Weapon Focus (tentacles) might not seem like that impressive a substitute, but with eight attacks per round, the +1 bonus on attack rolls really makes a difference. Another good choice is Ability Focus (paralysis) to increase the DC of the Fortitude save made to avoid its attack to 15. A carrion crawler that has those two Focus feats is much more likely to paralyze one or more party members before being killed.

On the other hand, you could keep Combat Reflexes and switch Track for Hold the Line (*Complete Warrior*, page 100), which gives the carrion crawler an attack of opportunity against any creature that charges it. A PC would get quite a surprise if her charge ended prematurely because she was paralyzed.

CHIMERA

Default Feats: Alertness, Hover, Iron Will, Multiattack.

Alternative Feats: Ability Focus, Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack.

Due to its Large size and poor maneuverability, a chimera that intends to fight while flying should keep the Hover feat. But if its dungeon lair is too narrow for hovering, the creature might prefer Blind-Fight to help it deal with invisible foes. A chimera with room to fly and an interest in staying out of harm's way might eschew Alertness and Multiattack in favor of Flyby Attack and Ability Focus (breath weapon), allowing it to make strafing runs at foes with its dragon breath.

COCKATRICE

Default Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Weapon Finesse^B.

Alternative Feats: Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative.

Giving a cockatrice Flyby Attack instead of Dodge will allow it to swoop in and attempt to petrify foes without ending its action within melee range. Improved Initiative instead of Alertness could help the monster slay a PC before the other adventurers can draw their weapons.

DIRE BAT

Default Feats: Alertness, Stealthy.

Alternative Feats: Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Weapon Finesse.

With flight, blindsense, and an Armor Class that is high for their Challenge Rating, dire bats are tough customers already. But you can make them even tougher by replacing their default feats with Flyby Attack and Weapon Finesse, granting them the ability to make swooping dives with a +8 bonus on attack rolls. As another option, you can give them Blind-Fight, since blindsense does not actually eliminate the miss chance from concealment, and have them lair in an area of permanent *deeper darkness*.

DIRE RAT

Default Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse^B.

Alternative Feats: Swarmfighting, Toughness.

Switching Alertness for Toughness will extend the life of a dire rat horde because each rat will be harder to finish off. You could also give a pack of dire rats the Swarmfighting feat (*Complete Warrior* page 105) so they gain impressive attack bonuses when attacking the same foe together, as well as the ability for many rats to attack from the same 5-foot space.

GARGOYLE

Default Feats: Multiattack, Toughness.

Alternative Feats: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.

Although most gargoyles prefer to fight with their bare claws, they are proficient with all simple weapons because of their monstrous humanoid type. A gargoyle wielding a longspear gains reach and the ability to make attacks of opportunity against charging foes, while still being able to make secondary bite and gore attacks once the enemy closes. The creature also might swap Toughness for Combat Reflexes, and might take Power Attack instead of Multiattack to take advantage of the higher damage dealt by two-handed weapons. In addition, the spear-wielders would be more effective if backed up by other gargoyles hurling javelins down from above; these supporting flyers could use Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot.

TEN HARMLESS DUNGEON DENIZENS

1. Rats. As common in dungeons as they are in city sewers, rats feed off trash and scurry about, making tiny noises and leaving trails in the dust.

2. Mold. Wet, dark dungeons are the perfect breeding ground for molds. Some might emit a faint light or react when creatures approach, but most molds are relatively harmless.

3. Bats. Outside of a swarm, bats pose little threat to a party of adventurers and would rather flee than fight. Groups bearing bright lights often stir up these flying pests.

4. Bugs. Vermin thrive in underground environments. Although not a direct threat, these creatures can ruin food stores quickly and can irritate PCs who are trying to sleep.

5. Young Monsters. Dungeons full of creatures often contain their offspring as well. These small beasts are rarely a threat, but they pose a quandary to the PCs: Should young monsters be allowed to live?

6. Slaves or Prisoners. Many dungeon creatures, especially the most evil and cruel, keep slaves and prisoners. Some slaves might be loyal to their masters, but most slaves and virtually all prisoners would prefer freedom if it were offered.

7. Lost Explorers. It is easy to become hopelessly lost in a dungeon. Explorers might barricade themselves in a defensible room where they can recover from wounds while coming up with a plan to find a way back to the surface.

8. Workers. Large groups of creatures might have an underclass of workers that toil away the hours mining, crafting, or repairing the dungeon. Such laborers have little interest in fighting a group of well-armed adventurers.

9. Food Animals. Carnivorous dungeon creatures need a reliable source of food, whether they snatch blind fish from ponds or feast on herds of pale cattle. Most predators turn to such animal husbandry when the surface is too far away to make frequent hunting trips.

10. The Dead. Probably the most common dungeon denizens, the dead pose little threat to anyone. Truly restless spirits might wander the halls, but they are not true ghosts and cannot harm anyone.

OWLBEAR

Default Feats: Alertness, Track.

Alternative Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Overrun, Power Attack.

If an owlbear is confined to a specific part of a dungeon, the ability to track prey is irrelevant. Owlbears bred for combat get more use out of Power Attack than Track, while those intended for sentry duty might be better off with Blind-Fight. Or, for a particularly nasty combination, create an owlbear that was trained by its owner to attack the intruder farthest away, on the theory that the most distant foe is usually a lightly armored wizard or archer. Such owlbears are taught Power Attack and Improved Overrun so that they can plow through front-line fighters to dig their claws into the softer prey at the rear.

RUST MONSTER

Default Feats: Alertness, Track.

Alternative Feats: Iron Will, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

A rust monster placed deliberately in an empty, enclosed area will need neither Alertness nor Track. Instead, give the creature Weapon Finesse to dramatically improve its chances of striking with its tentacles—an increase of +3 literally doubles its total attack bonus. Warrior PCs will step back from the monster to save their metal weapons and armor, so the beast must be able to stand up to the party spellcasters. Give it the Iron Will feat to increase its Will save bonus to an impressive +7. Alternatively, if you would rather see the rust monster leap out of the shadows at unsuspecting paladins in full plate armor, give it the Stealthy feat to increase its Hide and Move Silently modifiers to +5 each.

UMBER HULK

Default Feats: Great Fortitude, Iron Will (Truly Horrid only), Improved Natural Armor (Truly Horrid only), Multiattack, Toughness.

Alternative Feats: Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack, Improved Sunder, Power Attack.

An umber hulk can get along without Great Fortitude and Toughness, because Fortitude is its best save and it already has a high Constitution score. Replace those feats with Power Attack and Cleave. Their truly horrid cousins, however, have a lot more feats to play with. Try replacing Great Fortitude, Iron Will, and one of its three Improved Natural Armor feats with Power Attack, Cleave, and Improved Sunder for an umber hulk that can snap the weapons of its foes before crushing them. If you want to replace its other two Improved Natural Armor feats as well, Improved Initiative and Improved Natural Attack (bite) can make the umber hulk that much more deadly.

New Monsters

Two new dungeon denizens, the ascomoid and the rot grub swarm, are presented below.

ASCOMOID

Rolling along is a ball of fungus, made up of mottled patches of yellow and orange, marked with occasional indentations that look almost like gigantic pores.

ASCOMOID **CR 4**

Always N Medium plant
Init +2; **Senses** tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
(+2 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 45 (6 HD); **DR** 5/piercing
Immune trip attacks, cannot be knocked prone, plant immunities (*MM* 313)
Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2
Weaknesses double damage from piercing attacks, –4 to resist bull rushes

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)
Ranged spore jet +6 touch (2d4 acid)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8
Special Actions crushing trample (2d6+6, Reflex DC 17 half), trip

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 11
SQ plant traits, round body
Skills Listen +0, Spot +0
Advancement 7–10 HD (Medium); 11–16 HD (Large)

Spore Jet (Ex) As a standard action, an ascomoid can release a burst of highly acidic spores. The ascomoid can aim this burst at any creature within 60 feet with a ranged touch attack. The spores deal 2d4 points of acid damage.

Crushing Trample (Ex) A creature that has the trample ability normally deals slam damage with this attack. The ascomoid lacks a slam, but its bulk and shape allow it to crush its victims for a number of points of damage equal to 2d6 + 1-1/2 times its Strength bonus (Reflex DC 17 half; the save DC is Strength-based).

Trip (Ex) An ascomoid that hits with its crushing trample can attempt to trip the opponent (+8 check modifier) as a free

ASCOMOID LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn more about ascomoids. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC	Result
14	This creature is an ascomoid, a mobile plant.
19	An ascomoid is capable of rolling over creatures, knocking them to the ground.
24	An ascomoid can shoot a jet of acidic spores that burn opponents at a distance.

action without making a touch attack or provoking attacks of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the ascomoid. The check modifier includes a +4 racial bonus.

Round Body (Ex) Due to its round body, an ascomoid has immunity to trip attempts and can never be prone. However, ascomoids take a −4 penalty on checks made to bull rush them.

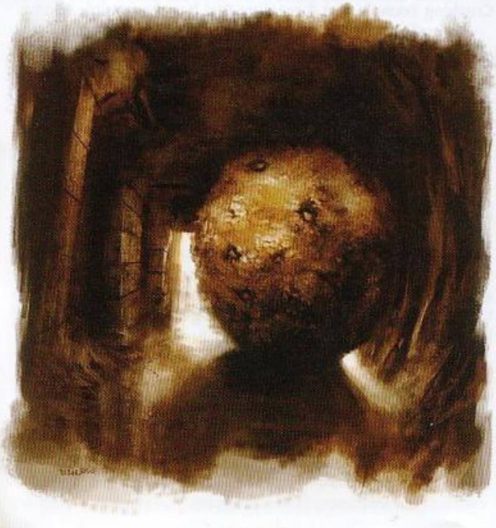
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Ascomoids engage moving objects by running into them. If a target is small enough, an ascomoid uses its crushing trample ability to deal damage. If a target is too large to be trampled, the ascomoid will spray it with a burst of acidic spores. Although ascomoids are mindless, many dungeon dwellers use them as sentinels and guard beasts. Ascomoids are relatively easy to herd and control. If given meat (whether fresh or rotten), they stop, extend several spore stalks into it, and devour it. Over time, an ascomoid learns to detect those who have repeatedly fed it, and the creature no longer attacks them.

Hobgoblins and goblins in particular make frequent use of ascomoid guardians. They lure the beasts into tunnels and galleries that lie at the edge of their territories, relying on them to attack intruders and hopefully cause enough noise to alert guards. Humanoid races rarely fight alongside ascomoids, because the creatures are too dense to coordinate with their allies.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER

Ascomoids wander far across a dungeon in search of food. When tamed by a group of intelligent creatures, they gather in a single place as long as they receive a steady supply of food.



Ascomoid

Illus. by Daarken

Individual (CR 4): A solitary ascomoid rolls through a dungeon looking for meat, crushing some creatures and spraying spores at others.

Grove (CR 6 to 8): Ascomoids usually travel in small groups of two to four. Larger groups are not unknown, and tales persist of massive swarms of ascomoids that have overrun goblin warrens and dwarf outposts.

ECOLOGY

Perhaps the most mobile plants, ascomoids move about by rolling their large bulk. The spores they leave behind eventually sprout new ascomoids if given the proper warmth, water, and nutrients (such as flesh).

Ascomoids can grow to a diameter of 10 feet, though most are much smaller. After growing for only a few weeks, one breaks free from its stem and begins to roll about, collecting nutrients. Ascomoids pose no threat until they grow to Medium size, which is when they gain their spore jet ability. A full-grown ascomoid weighs about 500 pounds.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Ascomoids never knowingly gather treasure, but their hunting grounds are usually strewn with items and valuables left by past victims. They have normal treasure for their Challenge Rating.

ROT GRUB SWARM

A wet, squelching noise emanates from the carpet of pale gray maggots that squirms along the ground.

ROT GRUB SWARM CR 6

Always N Diminutive vermin (swarm)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14
(+4 size, +2 Dex)
hp 54 (12 HD)
Immune weapon damage
Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares); climb 10 ft.
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +9; **Grp** —
Atk Options distraction
Special Actions death hazard, swarm (3d6 plus infestation)

Abilities Str 1, Dex 14, Con 10, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3
SQ swarm traits, vermin traits
Skills Climb +10, Hide +14*, Listen +0, Spot +0

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a rot grub swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Infestation (Ex) Any living creature that takes damage from a rot grub swarm might also become infested with rot grubs each round. A creature must make a successful DC 18 Reflex save to dodge the swarming grubs or bat them aside. The rot grubs infesting the creature burrow into its flesh. An infested creature takes 1d6 points of damage per round, plus an additional 1d6 points of damage for each failed

Reflex save against a rot grub swarm's attack. A successful DC 16 Fortitude save halves this damage. After 2d4 rounds, the sated rot grubs crawl away. A rot grub infestation can be removed with a successful DC 20 Heal check, though this check (whether successful or not) deals 1d6 points of damage to the infested target. Alternatively, a rot grub infestation can be destroyed by *remove disease* (*PH* 271) or any other effect that halts or counters a disease. Such spells destroy all the rot grubs inhabiting a target.

Medium or larger creatures that die from rot grub infestation spawn a new rot grub swarm within 2d4 days. Burning or otherwise destroying the body prevents this. Casting *raise dead* (*PH* 268) to restore a creature killed by a rot grub swarm does not destroy the rot grubs inside, but casting *remove disease* or a similar spell in the round afterward removes the grubs normally. *Resurrection* (*PH* 272) and *true resurrection* (*PH* 296) destroy the rot grubs when cast.

Death Hazard (Ex) Upon destroying a rot grub swarm, 1d6 rot grubs remain, spread throughout the space inhabited by the swarm. These rot grubs behave as the hazard (see page 140). Destroying these remaining rot grubs does not provide any additional experience points.

Skills A rot grub swarm has a +8 racial bonus on Move Silently checks, and adds its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier on Climb checks. A rot grub swarm can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

*A rot grub swarm has a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks while inside a corpse of at least Medium size. A rot grub swarm can enter and leave a corpse as part of a single move action.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Voracious devourers of all living things, rot grub swarms surge toward the nearest source of food each round. Their hunger alone drives them forward, leaving no room for such niceties as tactics or strategy.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Rot grub swarms are the bane of dungeon dwellers and adventurers alike. They leave few living creatures in their wake, and in some cases the swarms can turn entire dungeons into massive, horrific nests.

Individual (CR 6): A single rot grub swarm rarely lasts long. In the face of an approaching swarm, the intelligent inhabitants of a dungeon usually band together to destroy it. Petty rivalries, even conflicts between good and evil, are put aside to deal with the threat.

Scourge (CR 8 to 10): A group of two or more swarms is called a scourge. These immense assemblies of rot grubs can transform dungeons into barren wastelands.

ECOLOGY

Although seasoned adventurers know how to deal with rot grub swarms, even the stoutest shiver at the thought of facing these ravenous, burrowing maggots. A rot grub swarm's only weakness is its slow advance, which gives anyone in its path time to seek shelter from the hungry tide.

Rot grub swarms are the locusts of the underground. Whole dungeons have been wiped out by these terrible creatures. Occasionally, explorers will stumble across a dungeon scoured of living things and take it as a stroke of good luck—until they too fall victim to the marauding swarms.

Rumors abound of gigantic caverns filled with teeming hordes of these creatures. Dwarf folklore speaks of a mining expedition that opened a crack in a cave wall and perished when a wave of rot grubs poured into the room. Some dwarves whisper that a sea of rot grubs hides in the rotten heart of the world, and the vermin will one day spill forth like a plague to devour all life.

TYPICAL TREASURE

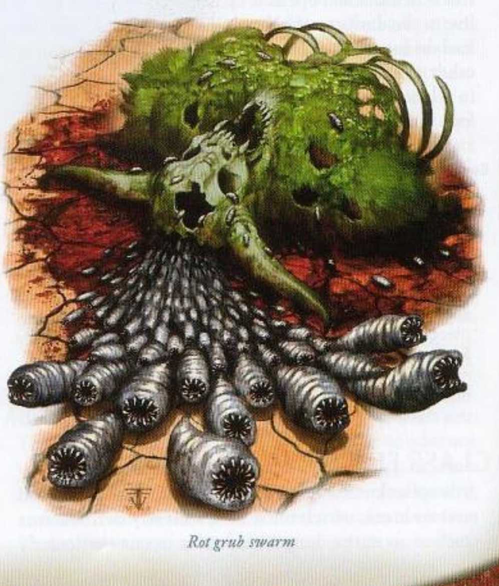
Rot grubs leave inorganic treasures in their wake. They devour wood, leather, and other goods. They have normal treasure for their Challenge Rating.

ROT GRUB LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nature) can learn more about rot grub swarms. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC	Result
16	This wriggling mass is a rot grub swarm, a type of vermin.
21	Rot grub swarms burrow into their victims' flesh, literally eating them from the inside out.
26	It is almost impossible to destroy a rot grub swarm fully. A few survivors always linger.



Rot grub swarm

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

New Prestige Class

The dungeon lord prestige class, presented below, is a prestige class that has powers and requirements that make it useful only for monsters and NPCs. This limitation is an intentional design decision. The class gives DMs a suite of tools and abilities for the major bad guy in charge of a dungeon.

DUNGEON LORD

> *It is said that the lich knows every stone in his infernal hold, and that any who dare to enter provoke his wrath. He can stroll through traps that would crush any other, and glide through the darkness while calling out doom. That dungeon is his domain, his home, and there is no way to defeat him in its halls.*
>
> —From the tale of Virdangast, dungeon lord

Some creatures become so familiar with their home that they can navigate it with their eyes closed and are attuned to the smallest change. Intruders tread on dangerous ground, facing a foe with a significant edge. When the home is a dungeon, the result is a dungeon lord. Undisputed masters of their environment; dungeon lords possess a supernatural awareness of their home and a fierce desire to crush those who dare to invade it.

BECOMING A DUNGEON LORD

Although the entry requirements for the dungeon lord prestige class are relatively simple, aspirants must have complete familiarity with one entire, specific dungeon environment. This requirement excludes most adventurers from the class and opens it up to creatures that actually live in the dungeon. Although the abilities of a dungeon lord do not add to a creature's spellcasting progression or other typical class features, they grant impressive powers in relation to dungeons, making this prestige class ideal for a number of monsters.

Entry Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Special: Intelligence 10 or higher.

Special: Ability to cast spells, or any spell-like or supernatural ability.

Special: Complete familiarity with the chosen dungeon environment and knowledge of the contents of every chamber (including other inhabitants, doors, traps, hidden objects, and all magical and mechanical effects).

Special: Must be an aberration, dragon, fey, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, outsider, or undead. Alternatively, humanoids of the goblinoid and kobold subtype can enter this class.

CLASS FEATURES

A dungeon lord's abilities depend on the specific dungeon environment, which must have a clearly defined area (such as an entire dungeon complex or one particularly large level). You can be familiar with only one dungeon at a time. If you are forced to leave your dungeon, none of the class abilities provided by this prestige class will function. Should you be driven out of your dungeon permanently, you can designate another. Typically, the level of familiarity needed requires at least two months of study and exploration, but it can take much longer, at the DM's discretion.

Table 5–1: The Dungeon Lord **Hit Die: d8**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Dungeon mastery, horde lord +1
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Dungeon step
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Complete awareness, dungeon minions
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	*Animate objects*
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Dungeon defender, horde lord +2, Leadership

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Climb, Craft, Disable Device, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, Spot, Swim, Use Rope.

Dungeon Mastery (Ex): Your familiarity with the dungeon is so complete that you know its entire layout by memory. While inside your dungeon, you can move at normal speed when unable to see and when crossing difficult terrain. You can move through any trap in the dungeon without triggering it, unless you choose to set it off. You automatically notice any difference to any chamber in your dungeon (such as a chair that is out of place, a bookshelf that has been reorganized, or an area of dust that has been disturbed). You also receive a +8 bonus on Survival checks made to track creatures in your dungeon.

In addition, you can open or close any door or secret door in your dungeon as a free action.

Horde Lord (Ex): You share your knowledge of the dungeon with the minions you command. Your allies gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls while you live and they are within the dungeon. When you attain 5th level, the bonus increases to +2.

Dungeon Step (Su): At 2nd level, you gain the ability to use *dimension door* (PH 221) to travel to any location in your dungeon. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Intelligence modifier (minimum 1). You cannot take others with you when you use this ability. Your caster level for this effect is equal to your Hit Dice.

Complete Awareness (Su): At 3rd level, you gain complete awareness of your dungeon. You can use *clairvoyance/clairaudience* (PH 209) at will to view any chamber in the dungeon. In addition, you receive a mental alarm, as the *alarm* spell (PH 197), whenever anyone enters the dungeon. This alarm tells you the location at which the intruder entered, but it gives no other details. Your caster level for these effects is equal to your Hit Dice.

Dungeon Minions (Ex): At 3rd level, you share your mastery of the dungeon with your allies. They can open and close doors and secret doors in the dungeon as free actions. They ignore difficult terrain within the dungeon that is caused by persistent, enduring features, such as rubble, cracks in the floor, and so forth. A newly introduced obstacle, such as an overturned cartload of apples, does not fall into this category.

Animate Objects (Sp): Beginning at 4th level, you can cause the dungeon itself to rise up against intruders. Once per day, you can cast *animate objects* (PH 199) on any object in the dungeon. Your caster level for this effect is equal to your Hit Dice.

Dungeon Defender (Ex): At 5th level, you become the unquestioned master of your dungeon. You defend it with the righteous fury of one whose cherished home is threatened. When you face intruders within your dungeon, you gain immunity to fear effects, and you gain a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and checks. In addition, the DC of the save against any spell, spell-like ability, or supernatural ability you use increases by 1.

Ixxiata, a dungeon lord

Illus. by W. England

Leadership: At 5th level, you gain Leadership as a bonus feat. If you already have the feat, you gain a +4 bonus to your Leadership score.

PLAYING A DUNGEON LORD

You are the master of your domain, and you know it. The dungeon is your sanctuary, your home, and those who dare to intrude upon it without your permission are despoilers, bent upon theft and murder. While within your dungeon, you are at the height of confidence, bordering on arrogance, for none can hope to defeat you. That does not mean, however, that you should underestimate intruders. They bring tools that are tailored to your destruction. When the time is right, you must act swiftly and decisively. Until such time, conceal your plans.

Outside your dungeon, you are nervous and uneasy. The external world is foreign to you and beyond your control. That makes you vulnerable, and you should strive to return to familiar territory as quickly as possible.

Combat

In combat, use your abilities and the tools around you wisely. Since you control the environment, use it to your advantage. Plan for a fight in nearly every chamber and develop a strategy for any possibility. Place traps, tools, and weapons where they will have the most effect. Take advantage of your mobility in darkness and through difficult terrain. If you have minions, make sure that their environment suits their abilities and minimizes their weaknesses. If you must make a final stand, do it in an area that has been customized to enhance your strengths.

Do not be afraid to retreat if a battle turns against you. Your opponents might score small victories, but you can outlast them. Perhaps you appear to cede ground to your enemies only to lure them into greater danger.

Always spy on your foes to determine their powers and abilities. Prey upon their confidence and use your knowledge about their tactics to your advantage. Nullify their strengths, and you will make quick work of them. At the height of your power, during a confrontation deep within the dungeon, focus your minions and animated objects on the opponent who poses the greatest threat. This ploy gives you ample time to deal with the remaining intruders.

Advancement

The dungeon lord prestige class does little to advance your other abilities, so to increase your power, take levels in other classes. Most dungeon lords turn to spellcasting and take levels in the cleric, sorcerer, or wizard classes. They offer versatility and allow you to summon allies, conjure obstacles, and alter the landscape of the dungeon to confound intruders.

Other options include classes that enhance your combat abilities. These are useful for deterring intruders, but they put you in a considerable amount of danger. Instead, once you have the Leadership feat, add minions to your dungeon, along with a cohort to lead them and to orchestrate defense.

Resources

Expect no assistance of any kind from other dungeon lords. In fact, they might seek to harm your cause if they view you as a threat or covet your dungeon. The only resources you can count on are those in your dungeon. All the creatures, magic items, and traps in it are at your disposal.

DUNGEON LORDS IN THE WORLD

"I'm telling you, we are being watched. The fiend seems to know our every move. He's ready for us at every turn."

—Regdar, dungeon intruder

Dungeon lords make excellent masters of nearly any subterranean redoubt. They know everything that transpires in their environment and can use that knowledge to great advantage. Gloating and overconfident, these masterminds are best used as recurring menaces. As the PCs descend from level to level, they might encounter a dungeon's lord now and again, but the final showdown should occur in the climtactic battle, when the master has no other choice. And of course, the dungeon lord has prepared a special battlefield that plays to his many strengths.

Dungeon lords need not be of evil alignment. A gold dragon dungeon lord, for example, might use its power to protect its lair and would be happy to lend some of its knowledge to adventurers who help it drive out a threat.

The daily life of a dungeon lord is as varied as those who take up the class. For most, the day (or specified period, as there are few clocks underground) begins with a tour of the dungeon to ensure that no one has disturbed any careful preparations or set off any traps. Especially paranoid dungeon lords might perform this check several times a day. The tour is followed by time spent increasing defenses or modifying chambers to better suit their needs. Otherwise, most dungeon lords keep busy honing their skills, such as crafting magic items, researching new spells, and training (or creating) minions.

Some dungeon lords, especially undead, spend long periods of time motionless, sitting on an ancient throne or sleeping in a sarcophagus. These eternal guardians mimic the rest that they are forever denied. But they can remain inactive only if the entire dungeon is sealed and there is little other work to be done.

Organization

No formal organization of dungeon lords exists. The only exception occurs when several dungeon lords band together to control a particularly large multilevel dungeon. These individual leaders often pay homage to a master who controls the largest, grandest, or deepest layer of the dungeon. Together, they form a council, meeting only when the need is greatest. Distrusting one another but unable to leave the dungeon, they are forced to cooperate to some small degree.

NPC Reactions

All residents of a dungeon treat the dungeon lord with the utmost respect and reverence. Those who fail to do so quickly find themselves expelled or worse. Servants show their respect through groveling, strict obedience, and a zealous work ethic. This deference extends to those in the dungeon lord's favor. Angering the master's lieutenant can carry as dire a consequence as angering the lord himself.

Few outside the dungeon lord's realm know of his existence, and in most cases, that is how he likes it. To the majority of townsfolk, the dungeon lord is just a tale told to make children eat their vegetables.

DUNGEON LORD LORE

Characters who have the bardic knowledge ability or ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research dungeon lords to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs. Lore about a specific dungeon lord can be learned only with a Knowledge check appropriate to that type of creature (such as Knowledge [the planes] for an outsider).

DC 10: Some creatures dwell in a dungeon for so long that they become intimately familiar with all its details. These creatures are known as dungeon lords.

DC 15: Dungeon lords are masters of their environment. Their strong connection to their dungeons allows them to know when anything is out of place.

DC 20: Powerful dungeon lords can sense intruders and turn the dungeon to attack them. Outside the dungeon, though, their abilities are greatly diminished.

DC 25: A dungeon lord can move about its lair at will and spy on intruders. Reckless explorers should prepare to face a mighty foe who knows everything about them and can strike at any time.

DUNGEON LORDS IN THE GAME

You can bring a dungeon lord into your game as part of the standard dungeon design process. Because the prestige class is well suited to NPCs, it gives you a great deal of flexibility when running an encounter with an evil mastermind who works behind the scenes to thwart the characters.

However, a dungeon lord is not a skilled combatant or spellcaster, so any creature that takes this prestige class should already have considerable powers. Much of a dungeon lord's strength comes from its preparation and planning. For example, a vampire wizard might spy on the PCs and learn that the rogue can evade area-effect spells. As a result, the cunning master prepares a *hold person* spell for that particular threat.

Adaptation

Although the focus of this prestige class is the dungeon environment, it could be adapted to any other contained lair or outpost, which need not be evil in nature. A king's captain who has levels in this class can watch the castle (his environment) carefully for intruders to protect the monarch. A silver dragon might treat sacred ruins as its dungeon, using its power to watch over the dead and guard an ancient weapon that might one day be needed again.

Sample Encounter

While exploring a dungeon, the PCs should become aware of the terror waiting for them through encounters with its cruel minions and clever traps. They might even confront the dungeon lord once or twice as it tests their strength and taunts them before retreating. But the final encounter with the dungeon lord should be the culmination of the adventure, a last, desperate battle to root out the evil that infests the subterranean fortress.

EL 10: The mind flayer dungeon lord Ixxiata resides deep within a lair of his own design that is riddled with cunning traps and powerful minions. From far below the city streets, the mind flayer uses *dominated* minions to stay apprised of events in the surface world and to manipulate them in his favor. Those who enter his dungeon face a host of *dominated* grimlock thralls, a pack of trained gricks, a variety of deadly traps, and, of course, a furious mind flayer.

Ixxiata has the Leadership feat and an effective leadership score of 15 (16 base, +2 for stronghold, –1 for aloof, –2 for cruelty). He has recently attracted the services of Shimmer, a particularly devious displacer beast. All his followers are grimlock thralls that maintain and protect his lair.

IXXIATA CR 10

Mind flayer dungeon lord 3
LE Medium aberration
Init +6; **Senses** telepathy 100 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +16
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Orc, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16
(+2 Dex, +3 natural, +3 armor)
hp 71 (11 HD)
SR 28
Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee 4 tentacles +10 (1d4+2)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10
Atk Options improved grab
Special Actions extract, *mind blast* (DC 22)
Combat Gear 2 *beads of force, elemental gem (earth), 2 potions of cure serious wounds*
Psi-Like Abilities (ML 11th):
At will—*charm monster* (DC 19), *detect thoughts* (DC 17), *levitate, plane shift, suggestion* (DC 18)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th):
At will—*clairvoyance/clairaudience* (from complete awareness), *alarm* (from complete awareness)
5/day—*dimension door* (from dungeon step)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 23, Wis 15, Cha 21
SQ dungeon mastery, dungeon minions, horde lord +1
Feats Ability Focus (mind blast), Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Leadership
Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Craft (trapmaking) +16, Diplomacy +12, Hide +13, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +20, Listen +16, Move Silently +13, Search +20 (+22 secret doors), Sense Motive +7, Spot +16
Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor +3, cloak of resistance +2, deck of illusions*

New Templates

Dungeon builders frequently try to adapt monsters that exist in the wild into perfect dungeon guardians. The following templates represent some of their more successful attempts.

ACIDBORN MONSTER

When a dungeon builder needs a deterrent, the only thing better than a giant pit of acid is a giant pit of acid with a shark in it. Until recently, this dream could not be realized because the shark always died after a short time in the acid. New breeding and rearing techniques, however, have yielded aquatic animals that can swim and breathe in acid as easily as their standard counterparts do in the ocean.

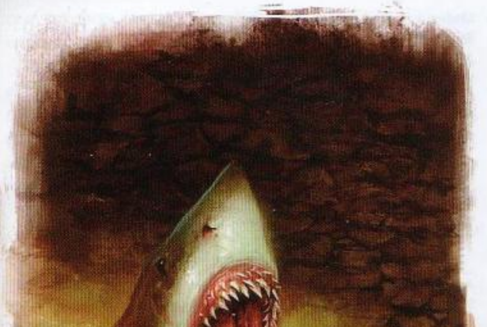
ACIDBORN SHARK, LARGE CR 3

Always N Large magical beast (aquatic, augmented animal)
Init +6; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., keen scent 180 ft., Listen +8, Spot +7

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(–1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural)
hp 52 (7 HD)
Immune acid, poison
Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Speed swim 60 ft. (12 squares)
Melee bite +7 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 acid)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +12

Abilities Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
SQ breathe acid
Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative
Skills Listen +8, Spot +7, Swim +11



Acidborn shark

Illus. by Daarken

Breathe Acid (Ex) An acidborn shark is capable of breathing acid just as it once breathed water. It is in no danger of drowning if immersed in acid. However, the shark cannot breathe in regular water, though it can hold its breath for as long as it is able.

Keen Scent (Ex) A shark can detect creatures by scent in a 180-foot radius and detect blood in a 1-mile radius.

Hook The shark is a sickly green-gray color, and pure steaming acid runs from its massive toothy maw.

CREATING AN ACIDBORN MONSTER

"Acidborn" is an inherited template that can be applied to any living corporeal animal, magical beast, plant, or vermin of the aquatic subtype (referred to hereafter as the base creature). An acidborn monster uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: If the base creature is an animal, its type changes to magical beast (augmented animal).

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus increases by +2.

Special Attacks: An acidborn monster's natural weapons deal 1d6 points of acid damage in addition to their normal damage.

Special Qualities: An acidborn monster retains the special qualities of the base creature, and also gains the following qualities.

—Immunity to acid and poison.

—*Breathe Acid (Ex)*: An acidborn monster is capable of breathing acid just as it once breathed water. It is in no danger of drowning if immersed in acid. However, the monster loses its ability to breathe in regular water, though it can hold its breath for as long as it is able.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Con +4.

Challenge Rating: As the base creature + 1.

DUNGEONBRED MONSTER

It can be difficult to maintain a dungeon that houses large living monsters. They consume vast amounts of food and water each day, produce a large amount of waste, and generally have shorter life spans than smaller creatures of a similar nature. They also require a lot of space to lair and even more to fight effectively. But some of the larger dungeon monsters offer advantageous special attacks that can be difficult to find in smaller creatures. For skilled monster breeders, the answer is to dungeonbreed the desired monsters.

Smaller than most of their kin, dungeonbred monsters are selected for long-term survival underground. They can go longer periods of time between eating, and they live significantly longer. Although reducing their size weakens their combat prowess, the gains in maneuverability, stealth, and accuracy make up for that.

DUNGEONBRED BLUE CHIMERA CR 7

Usually CE Medium magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Draconic

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17
(+2 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 76 (9 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6; +2 against disease and poison

Speed 30 ft. (8 squares), fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee bite +11 (2d6+2) and
bite +11 (1d8+2) and

ACIDBORN VARIATIONS

Some pioneering breeders have raised aquatic creatures that breathe pure molten rock, in defiance of all logic. To represent a lavaborn monster, replace the extra acid damage from its natural weapons with extra fire damage, replace the immunity to acid and poison with immunity to fire, and replace Breathe Acid with Breathe Lava.

Other variations on this template exist. Simply update the monster's extra damage, immunity, and breathe ability to reflect some other dangerous substance.

gore +11 (1d8+2) and
2 claws +9 each (1d6+1)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +11
Special Actions breath weapon

Abilities Str 15, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 10
SQ easy maintenance, hardy
Feats Alertness, Endurance^{B}, Hover, Improved Natural Attack (bite)^{B}, Improved Natural Attack (bite)^{B}, Improved Natural Attack (gore)^{B}, Improved Natural Attack (claws)^{B}, Iron Will, Multiattack
Skills Hide +2*, Listen +9, Spot +9

Breath Weapon (Su) 40-ft. line, once every 1d4 rounds, 3d8 points of electricity damage, Reflex DC 17 half.
Skills *In underground environments, a dungeonbred blue chimera has a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks.

Hook No bigger than a human, this chimera is no less ferocious in battle than its larger cousins.

CREATING A DUNGEONBRED MONSTER

"Dungeonbred" is an inherited template that can be applied to any living corporeal aberration, animal, magical beast, or vermin that is Large or bigger (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A dungeonbred monster uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The size of the creature is reduced one step, so that a Large base creature becomes a Medium dungeonbred monster.

Speed: If the base creature flies, its maneuverability improves by one step (from clumsy to poor, poor to average, average to good, or good to perfect).

Special Qualities: A dungeonbred monster retains the special qualities of the base creature, and also gains the following qualities.

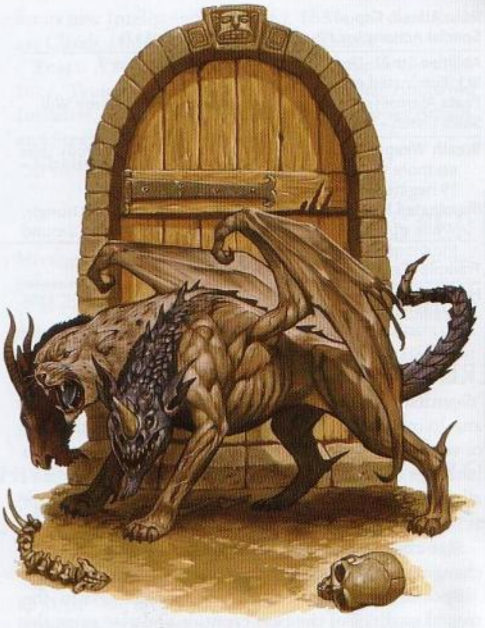
—*Easy Maintenance (Ex):* Dungeonbred monsters consume food and water as if they were one size smaller than they actually are (and thus two sizes smaller than the base creature). Further, all carnivorous dungeonbred monsters that are bred for the same dungeon will eat the same type of prey eagerly, regardless of the base creature used in each case, cutting down on the need to import exotic prey for different monsters.

—*Hardy (Ex):* A dungeonbred monster has a +2 racial bonus on saves against disease and poison.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Con +4. Since a dungeonbred monster is reduced in size from the base creature, remember to adjust its ability scores appropriately (*MM* 291).

Skills: If the base creature has a racial bonus on Hide checks or Move Silently checks in a certain terrain, that bonus applies to underground environments instead. Adjust the creature's Hide modifier to reflect its smaller size (*PH* 76).

Feats: Dungeonbred monsters gain the Improved Natural Attack feat for each of their natural weapons as a bonus feat, effectively retaining the original natural weapon damage of the base creature. They also gain Endurance as a bonus feat.



Dungeonbred blue chimera

Illus. by W. Mahy

Challenge Rating: As the base creature.

GUARDIAN MONSTER

Dungeon builders are frustrated by intruders who focus on avoiding (rather than confronting) monsters that defend vaults or treasure. Many have responded by breeding animals and monsters that have unusual sensory perception, designed to detect interlopers and respond with deadly force. Domesticated guardian monsters might serve as living alarm systems for other sentries, while monsters that cannot truly be domesticated—such as the guardian gorgon below—are usually left to themselves somewhere in the dungeon.

GUARDIAN GORGON CR 9

Always N Large magical beast
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, blindsense 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +16

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20
(–1 size, +11 natural)
hp 85 (8 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7; +2 against mind-affecting

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee gore +12 (1d8+7)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +17
Special Actions breath weapon, trample (1d8+7)

Abilities Str 21, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 7
SQ illuminated eyes
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight^{B}, Improved Initiative, Iron Will
Skills Listen +17, Spot +16

Breath Weapon (Su) 60-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds (but no more than 5/day), turn to stone permanently, Fort DC 19 negates.
Illuminated Eyes (Ex) A guardian gorgon's eyes glow strongly. While open, they illuminate a 60-foot-radius area around the monster.
Trample (Ex) 1d8+7 points of damage, Reflex DC 19 half.

Hook This steel bull waits patiently, its eerie glowing eyes scanning its surroundings for intruders.

CREATING A GUARDIAN MONSTER

"Guardian" is an inherited template that can be added to any living corporeal aberration, animal, magical beast, or vermin with an Intelligence of 3 or lower (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A guardian monster uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: If the base creature is an animal, its type changes to magical beast (augmented animal).

Special Qualities: A guardian monster retains the special qualities of the base creature, and also gains the following qualities.

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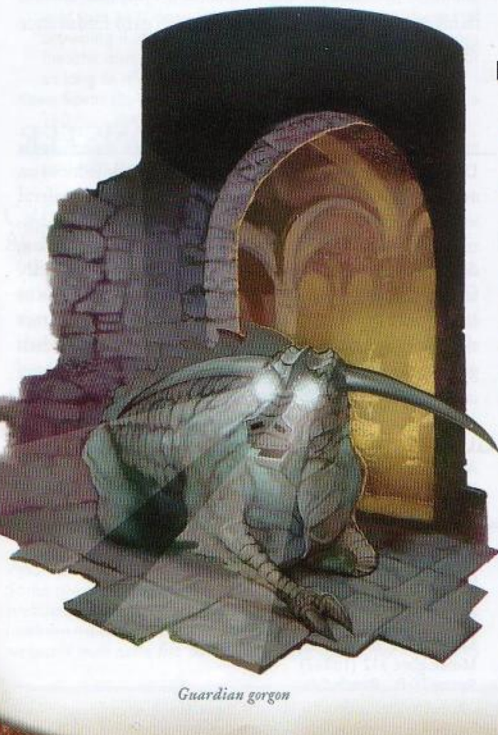


Guardian gorgon

—Blindsense out to 60 feet.

—Darkvision out to 120 feet.

—Low-light vision.

—*Illuminated Eyes (Ex):* A guardian monster's eyes glow strongly. While open, they illuminate a 60-foot-radius area around the monster.

—Guardian monsters do not need to sleep. They have immunity to magical sleep effects.

—Guardian monsters have a +2 racial bonus on saves against mind-affecting spells or abilities.

Abilities: Change from the base creature as follows: Wis +4, Cha –2.

Skills: A guardian monster has a +6 racial bonus on Listen checks and Spot checks. If the base creature already has a racial bonus on either check, the bonuses stack.

Feats: A guardian monster gains Blind-Fight as a bonus feat. If the base creature already has that feat, the guardian monster instead gains any other feat for which it qualifies.

Challenge Rating: As the base creature + 1.

SENTRY OOZE

Oozes make ideal additions to any dungeon. They consume the waste produced by other monsters and can be nasty little surprises in their own right. Some dungeon builders have conducted experiments to grant rudimentary intelligence to oozes by way of powerful magic. The resulting sentry oozes actively patrol their master's dungeon for intruders while cleaning it of debris.

ELDER SENTRY PUDDING CR 14

Always N Gargantuan ooze
Init +2; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +3

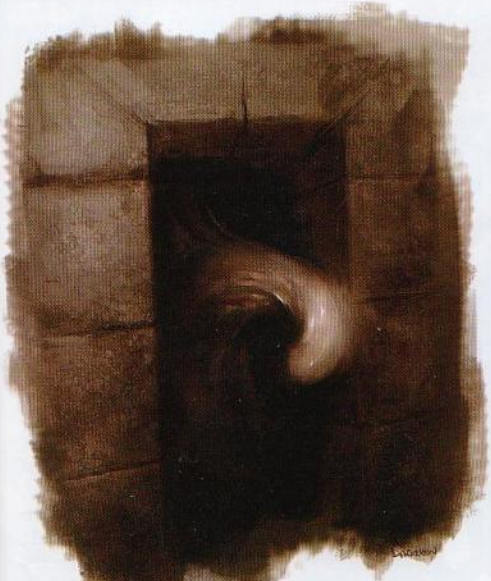
AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4
(–4 size, –2 Dex)
hp 290 (20 HD)
Immune critical hits, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, piercing damage, poison, sleep, paralysis, polymorph, slashing damage, stunning
SR 22
Fort +15, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6; +4 against mind-affecting

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.
Melee slam +19 (4d6+12 plus 3d6 acid)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +35
Atk Options improved grab, Power Attack
Special Actions constrict

Abilities Str 26, Dex 7, Con 28, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ ooze traits (*MM* 313), split
Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (slam), Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Move Silently), Stealthy
Skills Climb +16, Hide +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +9

Acid (Ex) Any melee hit or constrict attack deals 3d6 points of acid damage. Armor and clothing is dissolved (DC 29 Reflex save negates). Wooden or metal weapons striking the elder sentry pudding are dissolved (Reflex DC 29 negates).

Constrict (Ex) An elder sentry pudding deals automatic slam and acid damage on a successful grapple check. The opponent's



Elder sentry pudding

armor and clothing take a –4 penalty on Reflex saves against the acid.

Split (Ex) Piercing and slashing weapons deal no damage to an elder sentry pudding. Instead, the creature splits into two identical puddings, each with half the original's current hit points (round down). A pudding with 10 or fewer hit points cannot be further split, and the creature dies if reduced to 0 hit points.

Hook The massive pool of inky goo regards you carefully, reacting to your movements.

CREATING A SENTRY OOZE

"Sentry" is an inherited template that can be added to any living corporeal ooze with no Intelligence (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A sentry ooze uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Special Qualities: A sentry ooze retains the special qualities of the base creature, and also gains the following qualities.

—Spell resistance equal to Hit Dice + 2.

—No longer mindless, a sentry ooze is susceptible to mind-affecting spells and effects. However, it has a +4 racial bonus on its Will saves against such spells and effects.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Dex +6, Int +2, Wis +10, Cha +10.

Skills: A sentry ooze gains skill points equal to (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1) × (Hit Dice + 3) to account for its new Intelligence score of 2. The ooze's class skills are Climb, Hide, Listen, and Move Silently.

Feats: A sentry ooze gains one feat for every 3 Hit Dice. Typical feats include Ability Focus, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Power Attack, and Stealthy.

Challenge Rating: As the base creature + 2.

HIVENEST MONSTER

Hivenest monsters are nonliving creatures that house colonies of insects in their bodies, whether deliberately or as a result of infestation. The bugs crawl across their exterior and through their internal cavities constantly, wrapping their hosts with a layer of vermin. Hivenest monsters are particularly common in desert lands, where the mummification techniques used on undead tomb guardians attract swarms of scarab beetles.

HIVENEST MINOTAUR ZOMBIE CR 6

Always N Large undead

Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft., Listen +0, Spot +4

AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16
(–1 size, –1 Dex, +8 natural)
hp 81 (12 HD); DR 5/slashing
Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, energy drain, mind-affecting, nonlethal damage, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares; cannot run)
Melee gore +10 (1d8+5) or
slam +10 (1d8+5)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +15
Atk Options hivenest attack (2d6 plus poison)

Abilities Str 21, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
SQ hivedeath, hivenest distraction, single actions only, undead traits (*MM* 317)
Feats Toughness
Skills Listen +0, Spot +4

Hivenest Attack (Ex) Any creature struck by one or more of a hivenest minotaur zombie's slam attacks is dealt 2d6 points of damage plus poison (Injury, Fort DC 13, 1d4 Dex/1d4 Dex) from the centipedes' swarm attack at the end of the hivenest zombie's turn. Any effect that reduces or negates swarm attack damage, such as damage reduction, is applied separately to both the natural weapon attack and the swarm attack.

Hivenest Distraction (Ex) Any living creature vulnerable to a hivenest attack's damage that begins its turn in a square adjacent to a hivenest minotaur zombie is nauseated for 1 round. A successful DC 13 Fortitude save negates the effect. Spellcasting or concentrating on spells while adjacent to a hivenest zombie requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills that involve patience and concentration requires a successful DC 20 Concentration check.

Hivedeath (Ex) If a hivenest minotaur zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, it is destroyed but the swarm that nests within it is released. One centipede swarm is immediately placed

Illus. by Daarken

in the space previously occupied by the hivenest minotaur zombie. This swarm has full hit points, regardless of damage to the hivenest minotaur zombie, and acts independently of any control the zombie was under.

Hook A carpet of squirming centipedes crawls through the rotted flesh of this decaying minotaur.

CREATING A HIVENEST MONSTER

"Hivenest" is an acquired template that combines two creatures into one hybrid creature. The template can be added to any Large or larger corporeal plant, undead, or construct (referred to hereafter as the base creature) and to any Diminutive or Fine vermin of the swarm subtype (referred to hereafter as the base swarm).

Special Attacks: A hivenest monster retains the special attacks of the base creature, and also gains the following attacks.

—*Hivenest Attack (Ex)*: Any creature struck by one or more of a hivenest monster's natural weapon attacks also takes damage from the base swarm's swarm attack at the end of the hivenest monster's turn, as if the base swarm had ended its turn occupying the same space as the creature. Any effect, such as damage reduction, that reduces or negates swarm attack damage is applied separately to the natural weapon attack and to the swarm attack. If the swarm attack of the base swarm delivers poison, acid, or some other special effect, a successful hivenest attack delivers the same effect.

—*Hivenest Distraction (Ex)*: Any living creature vulnerable to a hivenest attack's damage that begins its turn in a square adjacent to a hivenest monster is nauseated for 1 round. A Fortitude save negates the effect; use the save DC for the base swarm's distraction special attack. Spellcasting or concentrating on spells while adjacent to a hivenest monster requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level). Using skills that involve patience and concentration requires a successful DC 20 Concentration check.

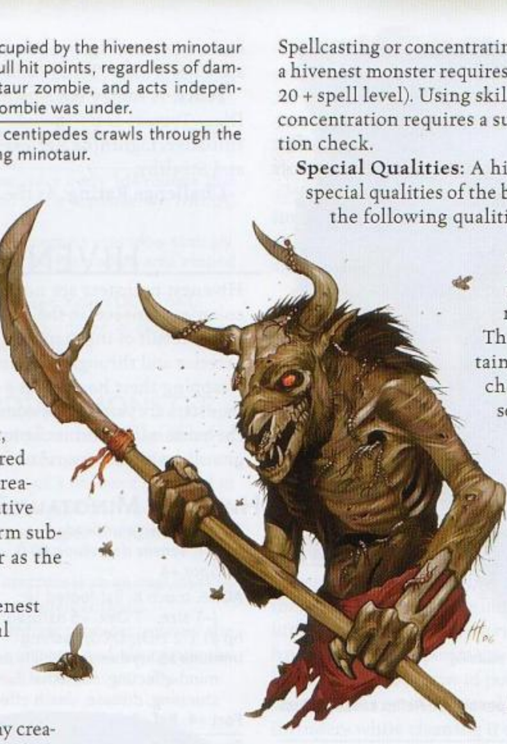
Special Qualities: A hivenest monster retains the special qualities of the base creature, and also gains the following qualities.

—If the base swarm has blindsense, blindsight, or tremorsense, the hivenest monster retains that ability. The hivenest monster also retains any racial bonus on Spot checks or Listen checks possessed by the base swarm.

—*Hivedeath (Ex)*: If a hivenest monster is reduced to 0 hit points, the monster is destroyed but the swarms that nest within it are released. One or more base swarms are immediately placed in the space previously occupied by the hivenest monster. Each swarm has full hit points, regardless of the damage taken by the hivenest monster, and acts independently of any control the hivenest monster was under. Effects that completely destroy the hivenest monster's body (such as *disintegrate* or *implosion*) prevent the hivedeath effect. The maximum number of swarms released is based on the size of the base creature.

Base Creature Size	Number of Swarms Released
Large	1
Huge	1–2
Gargantuan	1–3
Colossal	1–4

Challenge Rating: As a group consisting of the base creature and as many of the base swarms are as are released during hivedeath.



Hivenest minotaur zombie

Illus. by W. Maby

TRAPS

CHAPTER SIX

Illus. by R. Horsley

For some adventurers, the most dreaded noise in any dungeon is not the shriek of a banshee, the thunderous howl of an attacking troll, or the heavy beating of a dragon's wings. It is, instead, a quiet *click*.

Traps are an integral part of any dungeon, deadly obstacles that can be defeated only with care and caution rather than recklessness. Adventurers can kick down a door, charge a monster, and hope to survive unscathed, but that approach will not get them through a trapped corridor.

The presence of traps—or just the possibility of traps—can greatly affect the pace of a dungeon adventure. They bring out the PCs' paranoid instincts. Once adventurers believe that traps might be in use, they are more likely to search and study each room. This pace can work in your favor if you want to slow them down so they do not miss a valuable clue, but not if you want them to get through the dungeon quickly. Thus, think carefully about whether to include traps in a given dungeon.

Not all dungeons use traps. Dungeons with frequent traffic are less likely to include traps for fear of harming allied creatures. Dungeons that are essentially natural caverns almost never have traps because no one has been there to set them. Good-aligned creatures seldom use deadly traps, because they might harm innocents who wander into the dungeon by accident. Evil creatures do not worry about such issues, of course, and often set traps in their lairs if they can.

TRAP STRATEGY

Adding traps in a dungeon does not mean scattering as many traps as possible and hoping the PCs get nailed. Dungeon builders carefully plan the placement and nature of their traps, just as they do for monsters. Understanding the goals of trapmakers will help you create a coherent trap strategy that stands a chance of being effective.

KILLING INTRUDERS

Not all traps are intended to kill intruders. Traps capable of killing experienced adventurers are usually expensive. They also tend to be "all or nothing," meaning that if an invader successfully avoids the trap, he takes no damage.

Although many traps deal damage that ultimately leads to death, most do not deal enough damage to kill a fully healed adventurer outright. Such traps are not considered death traps because the damage will be healed in short order once the party moves on. Thus, the trap's only effect is to expend a small portion of the party's healing supplies. Traps that have this effect are better suited to a softening strategy (see below), unless they happen to deal a massive amount of damage for their Challenge Rating.

Examples: Magic traps that cause death effects (such as the *wail of the banshee* trap, CR 10, *DMG* 73) or Constitution damage (such as the burnt othur vapor trap, CR 7, *DMG* 73) are always considered killing traps. When the damage is high enough, traps such as the crushing wall trap (CR 10, *DMG* 74) can kill weaker intruders fairly easily.

Placement: Death traps are most effective early in the dungeon. Since the builders are simply trying to execute intruders, it makes sense that doing so early saves them and their minions the trouble of fighting trespassing adventurers later. A death trap placed late in a dungeon is almost an insult to the creatures that lose their lives in battle before the PCs ever reach the trap.

SOFTENING INTRUDERS

More commonly, traps are strewn about a dungeon as part of an attempt to weaken intruders over the long term, especially in dungeons used as lairs by powerful creatures. The traps slowly drain the adventurers' resources—every injury requires another *cure light wounds* spell, and every poisoning requires another *lesser restoration*. The more resources intruders expend, the fewer they have available to fight the dungeon's occupants.

This strategy works best when the owner of the dungeon can actively harass intruders, keeping them from resting as they explore deeper and deeper. In an unattended dungeon, however, traps that fail to kill the PCs are only a minor annoyance because the party can just wait until morning to replenish their cleric spells.

Examples: Most traps that deal ability score damage, such as the insanity mist trap (CR 8, *DMG* 73), fall into this category because they are incapable of causing death. Notable exceptions are traps that deal Constitution damage, which can be lethal. Energy-draining traps, such as the enervation trap (CR 5–7, *DMG2* 42), fit well with a softening strategy because they can kill only the weakest intruders.

Placement: Softening traps should be placed anywhere they can fit without interfering with the dungeon's daily operations. The higher the number of traps, the weaker the PCs will be in combat encounters. Traps placed early in the dungeon have a proportionately greater effect because their damage will be present for more encounters overall. If placed too close to the entrance, however, softening traps simply encourage the PCs to leave and rest until healed.

GAINING COMBAT ADVANTAGES

For kobolds, traps are about squeezing out whatever advantage they can in combat. If a trap can render a single foe prone before the beginning of a fight, that trap is worth building. Traps that give combat advantages to dungeon occupants are always placed near (or in) an encounter area. The trap's owners know that it is present, and they use its effect as their prelude to victory.

Example: Booby traps (CR 1/2, *DMG2* 41; also see page 54) are good examples of combat advantage traps because they can blind, trip, or disarm a foe. However, unless monsters are close by to follow up on these momentary advantages, these traps are all but useless. Any trap that causes temporary paralysis, such as the *ghoul touch* trap (CR 3, *DMG* 71), also falls into this category. Again, dungeon occupants should stand ready to strike down anyone who becomes paralyzed, or the effect will wear off a few rounds later, leaving the adventurer no worse than before.

Placement: Combat advantage traps are always placed near an ambush location or encounter area. To seize the momentary benefit when the trap is sprung, monsters should be no more than 1 or 2 rounds away. These traps work just about anywhere in the dungeon, and they often are most effective when paired with dangerous monsters.

DISCOURAGING PURSUIT

Some monsters build traps into their lairs to prepare for a day when adventurers might come for them, and they must turn tail and run. By acting as living bait, they hope to lure the PCs into an area with a trap powerful enough to defeat the foolish explorers, or at least slow them down for a few precious minutes. Such traps rarely reset automatically, because if it ever becomes necessary to spring one, its owner will be in the process of abandoning the area.

Examples: This category includes most pit traps, especially those with multiple targets, such as the camouflaged pit trap (CR 5, *DMG* 72). Not only does that trap have a chance of dropping one or more pursuers to their doom, but it also creates a pit obstacle that other adventurers will have to circumvent before continuing the chase.

Placement: Traps designed to discourage pursuit should be placed along whatever pathway the dungeon occupant intends to use in an emergency. Often, they are placed in secret tunnels that are not used by the general dungeon population. If this is the case, the occupant can safely leave the trap armed at all times, because he knows how to avoid it in the event of pursuit. However, if the only escape route lies along a heavily traveled corridor, the trap will need to be left unarmed most of the time, and set only in the event of invasion.

TESTING INTRUDERS

In certain dungeons, traps are intended to test intruders to determine if they are entitled to enter. Such traps generally have built-in bypass options that will be apparent to those who are worthy (based on the dungeon builder's definition of worthiness). Testing traps are rarely hidden; instead, they are presented rather openly to anyone entering their area, often with a written challenge or clue nearby. Depending on the nature of the dungeon builders, these traps might or might not be lethal.

Examples: Any trap with a delay between its activation and the final result can serve as a testing trap. The classic water-filled room (CR 7, *DMG* 73) and the compacting room trap (CR 6, *DMG* 72) are good examples, because they cause no damage or ill effects for the first few rounds. A clue in the room might grant a circumstance bonus on a Search check to find the trap's bypass mechanism, or on a Disable Device check to disarm the trap. Clever PCs who understand the clue can shut the trap down with no harm done. Alternatively, normal traps could have location triggers based on questions or riddles written nearby. If the PCs give the wrong answer, the trap activates.

Some traps test those who would pass

Placement: Testing traps make more sense the closer the PCs get to the final goal of the dungeon (reaching the center, destroying a temple, and so on). If you put one close to the dungeon's entrance, the logical argument would say that the PCs have proven themselves worthy by defeating the trap, and should not need to face further challenges in that dungeon. At the end of a long dungeon, though, testing traps serve to separate the truly deserving from those who are merely powerful.

EJECTING INTRUDERS

The purpose of an ejection trap is to remove the target completely from the premises. These traps are favored among good-aligned dungeon builders who have no wish to harm accidental trespassers.

Examples: The catapult trap (see page 135) is an example of an ejection trap, as would be one that used *plane shift* or *teleport* to magically dispose of intruders.

Placement: Ejection traps are best placed after intruders have already bypassed several dangerous obstacles in the dungeon, so that they must confront those obstacles again on their return trip. There is not much point in placing an ejection trap close to the dungeon's entrance, because the PCs will not find it particularly onerous to hike back. Also, ejection traps do not work as well in dungeons that offer plenty of monster encounters but few hazards or obstacles, because the PCs will dispose of most creatures on their first trip through and face few challenges on the return trip.

ALTERING THE DUNGEONSCAPE

Sometimes, the point of a trap is to alter the terrain features around the target rather than to affect the target directly. These traps shut doors, drop portcullises, open new passages, or release captive monsters. The main advantage of these traps is that a high Reflex save or Armor Class is of no use in defending against their purpose.

Examples: The portcullis trap (CR 1, *DMG* 71) is the prototypical dungeonscape alteration trap. Although the trap is capable of impaling an unlucky adventurer, its real point is to block movement through a passage, often cutting off retreat. The separation wall trap (CR 1, *DMG2* 44) is another prime example.

Placement: Traps that alter the dungeonscape can be placed just about anywhere,

Illus. by S. Belledin

but they must work in conjunction with the overall floor plan of the dungeon to have any meaning. For example, traps that cut off avenues of retreat work only if there are no other passages for escape. Similarly, traps that open new paths work best if the revealed areas contain unhappy monsters that leap out and attack the PCs.

ENCOUNTER TRAPS

Many of the standard traps in the D&D game are usually brief obstacles to experienced PCs, draining few resources. Encounter traps are different—they engage the entire group in overcoming a trap's attacks, and the trap becomes an encounter unto itself. Many encounter traps behave more like monsters, acting in the initiative order and trying to smash, poke, or burn intruders. Encounter traps can contain large moving parts, such as crushing blocks, rolling boulders, or spinning blades, while others rely on spells or hazardous substances, such as burning jets of oil, bolts of lightning, or acidic gases.

Although standard traps still have a place in the dungeon, throwing a few encounter traps into the mix makes every room an opportunity for adventure.

ENCOUNTER TRAP FORMAT

Like standard traps, encounter traps are activated by a trigger. Once set in motion, encounter traps run for a set amount of time (usually, a few minutes) or until defeated. The trap activates on its initiative count, allowing the PCs to act while the trap resets. Each sample encounter trap presented here provides a number of pieces of information needed to run the trap.

Description: This section describes how the trap functions, including the area it affects and how it deals damage. This section also describes the typical trigger and room layout, which can be changed to suit specific encounters.

Search: This section gives the DC of the Search check that is required to find the trap. If the DC is exceeded by 10 or more, the searcher also finds the specific area from which one of the attacks will originate (allowing it to be disarmed before the trap is sprung).

Type: This section identifies the trap as mechanical (using objects or hazardous substances to attack those who enter its area) or magic (using a spell or magic item to attack those who enter its area).

Trigger: This section describes the means by which the trap is activated. Typically, traps activate by location or tough trigger, going off when the PCs step on a pressure plate or touch a specific object. Magic traps often have a detection trigger and activate when an intruder is detected through such spells as *alarm* or *true seeing*. Other traps trigger after a preset time has expired, such as a trap that activates 1 minute after the door to the room is opened.

Init: This modifier is used to determine the trap's place in the initiative order. When the trap is sprung, the PCs, the trap, and any other creatures in the room roll initiative to determine the order of action.

Effect: This section describes the specifics of the trap's attacks, including its attack bonus, damage, save DC, save type, and the area affected by each separate attack. Encounter traps make a number of attacks each round, usually, one attack per 5-foot-by-5-foot square. The DM should roll each attack separately unless the area affected by an individual attack affects multiple targets, in which case a single attack applies to all targets. Traps that utilize spells function in much the same way, with each square under attack each round.

Duration: This section specifies how long the trap functions before it must be triggered again. Some traps must be reset entirely once triggered and do not reset automatically.

Destruction: This section gives the Armor Class, hit points, and hardness (if any) of a single attack source. If an attack source is destroyed, the area it affected becomes safe, but the remainder of the trap continues to function normally. Some traps have a central location that, if destroyed, wrecks the entire trap. An individual attack source can be attacked from any square in the area it affects or from a square adjacent to that area.

Disarm: This section gives the DC for disabling a single attack source. Each successful Disable Device check disables one attack source, allowing the others to function normally. Some traps have a central location that,

TRAPS AND MONSTERS

The inhabitants of a dungeon usually know where all the traps are placed, and smart monsters can turn traps to their advantage in battle. A few common tactics involving traps include these.

Bull Rush: The monster bull rushes its foe into the trap's activation area, hoping that he is harmed by the trap's effect. If the trap involves a pit, this tactic works even if the trap has already activated, because the pit remains.

Snatch: A monster that has the Snatch feat can fling a grappled foe into a trap's activation area. Triggering a trap in this manner adds injury to insult.

Ambush: Kobolds favor this tactic, which involves lying in wait until the enemy springs a trap. The ambushers then attack, making the most of the trap's effects to turn the battle their way.

Remote Activation: If a trap attacks a location other than where it is triggered, a monster can trigger the trap to hit the PCs without ever having to risk getting too close to the adventurers.

Table 6–1: Encounter Traps

	Base	Upgrades (pick one)
Type		
Mechanical or magic		
Detection		
Search	15 + CR	20 + CR
Trigger		
Location, detection, touch, or timed		
Initiative modifier	+ 1/2 CR	+ CR
Effect		
Melee attacks	Atk +CR, average damage CR × 2-1/2	+2 Atk or +CR average damage
Elemental effects	Average damage CR × 3-1/2, save DC 10 + CR	+2 save DC or +CR average damage
Spell attack	Average damage CR × 3-1/2, save DC 10 + (spell level × 1-1/2)	+2 save DC or +CR average damage
Spell effect	Spell level = CR/2, save DC 10 + (spell level × 1-1/2)	+2 save DC or cumulative spell effect
Duration		
Typical time	3 rounds + 1 round per CR	+4 rounds
Destruction		
Location	AC 10 + CR; hp CR × 2-1/2 or weapon stats	+2 AC or +CR average hp or +CR hardness
Whole trap	AC 10 + (CR × 1-1/2); hp CR × 4-1/2	—
Disarm (mechanical trap)		
Location	DC 15 + CR	+2 DC
Whole trap	DC 15 + (CR × 2)	—
Disarm (magic trap)		
Location	DC 25 + spell level	+2 DC
Whole trap	DC 25 + spell level	—
Dispel (magic trap)	DC 11 + CL	+2 DC

Disadvantages (pick one)

1. One central disarm location shuts down the entire trap
2. One central destruction location shuts down the entire trap
3. One central dispel attempt can shut down the entire trap
4. Each individual attack targets an area greater than 5 ft. by 5 ft.
5. Reduce Search DC or Disable Device DC by 5; reduce save DC by 2
6. Trap does not attack every square in the room each round
7. Trap does not reset

Advantages (pick one instead of an upgrade)

1. Trap springs quickly, granting a surprise round attack; Spot check or Listen check (DC 15 + CR) allows action
2. When dispelled, the trap shuts down for only 1d4 rounds (magic traps only)
3. Each Disable Device check takes twice as long as normal

if disarmed, shuts down the entire trap. Unlike standard Disable Device checks that take 2d4 rounds to complete, making a Disable Device check on a single attack source takes 1 round, and making a Disable Device check on a central disarm location takes 1d4 rounds.

Dispel: Magic traps can be dispelled through the use of *dispel magic* or similar effects. This section gives the DC for caster level checks (typically 11 + caster level). Usually, one casting of *dispel magic* shuts down a single attack source, but some traps have a central dispel location that, if dispelled, shuts down the entire trap. An area *dispel magic* attempt affects only one attack source, but the spell can test against each source until it succeeds.

HALL OF SPEARS TRAP CR 1

Description This simple trap is often built by goblins and kobolds to protect their tunnels. A series of camouflaged holes in the ceiling of a 40-foot stretch of a 5-foot-wide corridor conceal spears attached to unevenly weighted wheels. The corridor ends in a locked door with a poorly maintained lock (Open Lock DC 20). When the trap is triggered by a trip cord near the door, the wheels roll, and the spears begin thrusting downward into the corridor. After a few rounds, the wheels come to a stop on their own, and the trap stops working. Kobolds usually wait until this trap

FIVE ENCOUNTER TRAP TIPS

1. Get everyone involved. Make sure that each PC can contribute to dealing with the trap.

2. Keep the PCs engaged. Make sure they cannot simply retreat and wait for the trap to wind down.

3. Provide multiple ways to defeat the trap. Aside from disarming or destroying it, maybe the PCs can move levers or cranks to shut down parts of the trap or slow the pace of its attacks.

4. Vary the focus of traps. Instead of always placing an encounter trap near an exit door, try trapping a treasure, a secret message, a prisoner, or an enemy.

5. Make it last. Design the trap in such a way that the PCs cannot disarm it or escape from it in 1 round. Add two locks to a door, three chains to a chest, or four levers to open a lock.

is sprung to emerge from hiding places and shoot arrows into the trap area. The trap needs to be reset manually by its owners.

Search DC 16; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +0

Effect One Small shortspear (Atk +3, 1d4 points of piercing damage) per square per round

Duration 4 rounds

Destruction AC 11; hp 5; hardness 5 (each shortspear)

Disarm Disable Device DC 16 (each shortspear)

DART SWARM TRAP CR 2

Description This chamber is 50 feet long and 30 feet wide. Above both entrances are heavy stone doors that slide out of the ceiling and seal the exits. Three metal cranks are located in the room on separate walls. The ceiling is perforated with hundreds of tiny holes. When the PCs step on a pressure plate in the middle of the room, the stone doors slide over the exits and can be opened only by turning the cranks (DC 15 Strength check per crank). All three cranks must be turned in the same round to lift the door 1 foot. Small PCs can squeeze under the door once it has risen 2 feet, but Medium PCs need 3 feet of space. Meanwhile, tiny darts shoot out of the ceiling holes and attack each square in the room. The trap does not reset.

Search DC 17; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +1

Effect 1d4 darts (Atk +2 ranged, 1d4 points of piercing damage) per target per round

Duration 9 rounds

Destruction AC 12; hp 5 (each ceiling square)

Disarm Disable Device DC 17 (each ceiling square)

CROSSED SWORDS TRAP CR 4

Description At the center of this 35-foot-square room is a tall pillar. Six thin slots in the floor (spaced 5 feet apart) run the length of the room, and six more run the width, forming a grid. Entering the room triggers the trap, causing the doors to slam shut. Each round, three greatswords rise up out of one set of slots, and three more rise up out of the other set of slots (determined randomly). All six greatswords rush across the room, retracting when they reach the opposite wall. It is possible for a target to be attacked by two blades in a single round. The entire trap can be disarmed at the central pillar.

Search DC 19; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +2

Effect One or two greatswords (Atk +4, 2d6 points of damage) per target per round

Duration 7 rounds

Destruction AC 14; hp 10; hardness 10 (each greatsword)

Disarm Disable Device DC 19 (each greatsword)

Disarm Disable Device DC 23 (entire trap)

MISSILE CRYSTAL TRAP CR 4

Description This triangular chamber has only one entrance. In each corner of the room sits a faintly glowing blue crystal. The center of the room contains a crystal chest (attached to the floor) that holds a great treasure. When the PCs enter the room, the trap activates, and the three corner crystals begin to fire *magic missiles* at all creatures in the room (one missile per crystal per target). Until all three crystals are destroyed, each creature is targeted each round. After the trap's duration expires, it takes 1 minute to recharge. If the crystal chest is destroyed, the trap stops functioning. The chest is secured with two locks and can be opened with two successful DC 25 Open Lock checks.

Search DC 19; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +2

Effect One *magic missile* (automatically hits, 1d4+1 points of damage, CL 5th) per crystal per creature

Duration 7 rounds

Destruction AC 14; hp 10; hardness 5 (each corner crystal)

Destruction AC 16; hp 18; hardness 5 (crystal chest)

Disarm Disable Device DC 26 (each corner crystal)

Dispel DC 16 (each corner crystal)

SPIKED CEILING TRAP CR 6

Description This 40-foot square chamber has a single entrance and exit. The trap is activated by a pressure plate in the floor in front of the exit door, causing both doors to close immediately. They open again when the trap is disarmed or its duration has expired. The ceiling is covered in spikes that randomly descend each round to attack every square in the chamber. Four chain pulley mechanisms, one set into each wall, control the spikes. Disabling or destroying a mechanism reduces the number of spikes that attack each round.

Search DC 21; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +3

Effect Spikes (Atk +8 melee, 1d6 spikes per target for 1d8+1 piercing damage); reduce the number of spikes by 1 for each chain mechanism disabled or destroyed (minimum 0)

Duration 9 rounds

Destruction AC 16; hp 15 (all spikes in one square)

Destruction AC 19; hp 27 (each chain mechanism)

Disarm Disable Device DC 21 (all spikes in one square)

Disarm Disable Device DC 27 (each chain mechanism)

GEYSER CAVERN CR 7

Description This trap is actually a natural geological phenomenon. A steamy underground cavern has a natural stone floor that feels warm to the touch. Due to geothermal heat, hot water is held beneath the floor under great pressure. Near the center of the room, the stone crust is so thin that the slightest disturbance (such as an adventurer stepping on it) will cause the entire floor to erupt with scalding hot jets of water. The trap cannot be destroyed, but it can be stopped by cooling the water. Any spell that deals cold damage "disarms" any geyser vents in the spell area. Each geyser can be disabled by plugging its vent with an object. Once the geysers have run their course, it takes approximately 300 years for them to become crusted over again. A dwarf entering the cavern is entitled to a Search check to notice the weakened stone crust, even if he is not actively searching for it.

Search DC 22; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +3

Effect Scalding hot jets of water (automatically hit, 4d6 points of bludgeoning damage + 5d6 points of fire damage, DC 17 Reflex half); trap attacks 10 random squares per round

Duration 10 rounds

Disarm Disable Device DC 22 (each geyser vent)

ADDER'S BREATH TRAP CR 8

Description This rectangular chamber is 60 feet wide and 30 feet long. In the center of the room, an altar holds a valuable treasure wrapped in three stone serpents. Each serpent has a lock (DC 25 Open Lock check) but can also be destroyed. The treasure cannot be removed from the altar until all three stone serpents are unlocked or destroyed. Two stone snake statues, each 10 feet tall, stand on opposite ends of the room facing each other. When the PCs touch the altar, the statues begin to spit venom at random targets in the room. The trap shuts down if the treasure is removed from the altar.

Search DC 23; **Type** Magical

Trigger Touch (*alarm* on the altar); **Init** +4

Effect *Poison* (Atk +8 ranged touch, 1d10 points of Con damage, DC 16 Fortitude negates, save again after 1 minute, CL 7th); two random targets per round

Duration 11 rounds

Destruction AC 18; hp 20; hardness 8 (each spitting statue)

Destruction AC 22; hp 12; hardness 8 (each serpent holding the treasure)

Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each spitting statue)

Dispel DC 18 (each spitting statue)

DRAGON HAMMER TRAP CR 8

Description This 35-foot-long hall is flanked on each side by three alcoves. Opposite the only entrance is a towering statue of a dragon on a raised platform. A stone block with a sealed lid sits in the center of the room, just in front of the dragon. The block covers a treasure or a passageway out of the chamber. The block moves when the trap is disarmed or with a successful DC 30 Strength check. The trap is activated when the PCs approach to within 5 feet of the stone block. The trap has two possible effects. Either stone columns descend from the ceiling and pound four of the six alcoves (determined randomly), or the room fills with fire that issues from the dragon's gaping maw. Only one effect is active each round (determined randomly).

Search DC 23; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +4

Effect One stone column (Atk +8, 6d6 points of damage) in each of four alcoves, or

Effect jet of alchemical flame (6d6 fire damage, DC 18 Reflex half) in whole room except alcoves

Duration 11 rounds

Destruction AC 18; hp 20; hardness 8 (each column)

Destruction AC 18; hp 28; hardness 8 (dragon statue)

Disarm Disable Device DC 23 (each column or the dragon)

RAZOR PENDULUMS TRAP CR 10

Description This chamber is 60 feet long and 20 feet wide. Along each long wall, twelve large slots run from floor to ceiling, one every 5 feet. The trap is activated when the PCs reach the center of the room. Razor-sharp blades attached to 12 pendulums in the ceiling swing across the room, attacking every square in the room. Anyone in the room can attempt a DC 20 Spot check to notice the pendulums emerging from the wall slots and act in the surprise round. If an individual pendulum is destroyed, an entire row of squares (20 feet wide) is made safe. The door on the opposite side of the chamber is securely locked (Open Lock DC 40). Attached to one of the pendulums is a key that opens the door. Noticing the key requires a successful DC 25 Spot check, and grabbing the key requires a successful DC 25 Dexterity check or Sleight of Hand check. Anyone who fails a check to grab the key takes damage from the pendulum (only once per round). If the pendulum with the key is destroyed, the key is easily recovered.

Search DC 25; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +5

Effect 12 pendulum blades (Atk +10 melee, 7d6 points of slashing damage); each blade attacks all creatures in one 5-foot-by-20-foot row

Duration 13 rounds

Destruction AC 20; hp 20 (each pendulum)

Disarm Disable Device DC 25 (each pendulum, but only at the ceiling, 20 feet above the floor)

BOULDER ALLEY TRAP CR 12

Description In this 60-foot-by-30-foot chamber, six deep grooves in the floor stretch from wall to wall, filling the entire room. Alcoves on both sides of the room hold large boulders. A pressure plate just inside the door activates the trap, causing each boulder to tumble out of its alcove and roll along its groove until it comes to rest in the alcove in the opposite wall. A boulder travels the full 60-foot length of the room in a single round. Roll 1d6 each round to determine which groove releases its boulder. Creatures in the path of that boulder are subject to bludgeoning damage if they fail a save. In addition, all creatures in the room are targeted by *hold monster* spells each round.

Search DC 27; **Type** Magical and mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +6

Effect Rolling boulder (10d6 points of bludgeoning damage, DC 22 Reflex negates), and

Effect *Hold monster* (duration 9 rounds, DC 17 Will save each round negates) on targets not already *held;* the effect emanates from glyphs in the center of each groove; dispelling or destroying a glyph eliminates this effect in its groove

Duration 15 rounds

Destruction AC 22; hp 30; hardness 8 (each boulder)

Destruction AC 22; hp 30 (each glyph)

Disarm Disable Device DC 27 (each boulder)

Disarm Disable Device DC 30 (each glyph)

Dispel DC 20 (each glyph)

DISPELLING PIT TRAP CR 12

Description This trap combines a deep pit full of spikes with a *greater dispel magic* effect. The room is 40 feet wide and 60 feet across. A 40-foot-square pit sits in the center of the room, leaving a 10-foot wide ledge on either side. The pit is 60 feet deep, and its walls are very smooth (successful DC 25 Climb check to scale). The exit door sits on the opposite side of the room, across the pit. Mounted in the ceiling is a large brooding stone face. Anyone who enters the space of the pit, whether flying, climbing, or jumping, triggers the trap and is subjected to a *greater dispel magic* cast from the stone face. If the stone face is targeted by a spell, it uses the same *greater dispel magic* to attempt to counter the spell (CL 13th).

Search DC 27; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +6

Effect *Greater dispel magic* (cast at each target in the area of the pit, CL 13th); anyone falling in the pit takes 6d6 points of falling damage

Duration 15 rounds

Destruction AC 28; hp 54; hardness 8 (stone face)
Disarm Disable Device DC 31 (stone face)
Dispel DC 24 (stone face)

Glacial Jet Trap CR 14

Description This cold, 50-foot-square chamber is covered in a thin sheet of ice. On the opposite side of the room is a 5-foot-square block of ice that contains a treasure or blocks the exit. The trap is activated when anyone approaches to within 10 feet of the block of ice. A jet of freezing water sprays down from the ceiling of the chamber, hitting anyone within 10 feet of the block of ice. Some of this water freezes in the chamber, but much of it flows down a series of drains. The block of ice regains 20 hit points each round if the nozzle above it continues to function.

Search DC 34; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +7
Effect Jet of freezing water (8d6 points of cold damage + 4d6 points of nonlethal damage, Reflex DC 22 half); targets who fail their save are also knocked prone by the force of the water
Duration 17 rounds

Destruction hp 180 (+20 hp per round while jet sprays), hardness 5 (fire damage ignores hardness and deals 1-1/2 × damage) (block of ice)
Destruction AC 24; hp 35 (each nozzle)
Disarm Disable Device DC 29 (each nozzle)

Prismatic Doom Trap CR 16

Description This 50-foot-square chamber is coated in shimmering silver foil that reflects the light emitted from large silver mirrors in each corner. A 10-foot section of floor in the center of the room contains a trapdoor with four locks (Open Lock DC 35 for each). Beyond the door is a passageway or hidden treasure. The trap is activated when anyone approaches to within 10 feet of the trapdoor. At that point, one of the four mirrors (determined randomly) releases a heightened *prismatic spray* each round, affecting the entire room except for a few squares in the opposite corner. Until only one mirror remains, no square in the room is safe from the effect.

Search DC 31; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +8
Effect Heightened *prismatic spray* (Fortitude DC 22, Reflex DC 22, Will DC 22, CL 16th; see *PH* 264)
Duration 19 rounds

Destruction AC 26; hp 40; hardness 10 (each mirror)
Disarm Disable Device DC 33 (each mirror)
Dispel DC 27 (each mirror)

Lava Curtains Trap CR 18

Description This dangerous trap is set in a 30-foot square room. Spaced every 5 feet along the ceiling are six long slots that run wall to wall in each direction, forming a grid. Drains in the floor are positioned directly beneath the slots. When the trap is activated, two slots in each direction (chosen randomly) issue a torrent of molten rock, forming four burning curtains that remain for the entire round. On the trap's next action, these curtains and four new curtains form, two in each direction. Aside from the entrance, the room has three locked doors (Open Lock DC 35 for each). Behind one of the doors is a mechanism that, if disarmed, shuts down the entire trap. Behind the second locked door is a passage out of the room. The third locked door conceals a dead end; if this door is opened, all 12 lava curtains (six in each direction) turn on until the door is closed.

Search DC 33; **Type** Mechanical

Trigger Location; **Init** +18
Effect Lava curtain (18d6 points of fire damage, DC 28 Reflex half); no save for anyone who crosses through a lava curtain willingly
Duration 21 rounds

Destruction AC 28; hp 45; hardness 10 (each slot)
Disarm Disable Device DC 33 (each slot)
Disarm Disable Device DC 51 (whole trap)

Dance of Death Trap CR 20

Description This deadly trap combines two powerful spell effects to destroy intruders. In the center of a 30-foot-square chamber of polished black stone is a skull made of pure diamond. The trap activates when anyone approaches to within 5 feet of the skull. When that occurs, the skull glows with an unholy light, and anyone who makes contact with the skull (including with a melee weapon) begins to caper and dance. Green rays shoot from the skull's eye sockets, draining the life from random targets. A door on the opposite side of the room can be opened only after the trap is disarmed or destroyed.

Search DC 35; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +10
Effect *Otto's irresistible dance* (subject does nothing but dance for 1d4+1 rounds, no save, CL 17th; see *PH* 259); this spell affects anyone who contacts the skull in any way; the dancing does not begin until the action is resolved, but additional attacks made from a full attack action are lost
Effect *Energy drain* (+20 ranged touch, 2d4 negative levels, DC Fortitude 23 removes one level after 24 hours, CL 17th); two rays per round at random targets
Duration 23 rounds

Destruction AC 40; hp 90; hardness 10 (skull)
Disarm Disable Device DC 34 (skull)
Dispel DC 28 (whole trap); if successful, the trap shuts down for 1d4 rounds

Devil's Throne Trap CR 22

Description This powerful trap is built into a large and elaborately carved throne room with a diabolic motif. Relief sculptures of stone wings, six extended claws, and a coiled tail reach out from a throne centered on the far wall. When the trap is triggered, each stone limb ignites with magical fire and attacks. Meanwhile, the throne uses magic to hold foes in place so that the fiendish limbs can crush them. Destroying the throne deactivates the entire trap. This trap is usually found as part of the seat of power of a pit fiend or other mighty devil (encountering the trap and a pit fiend together raises the CR to 23).

Search DC 37; **Type** Magical

Trigger Detection (*true seeing*); **Init** +11
Effect Crushing limbs (Atk +20 melee, 10d6 points of bludgeoning damage + 6d6 points of fire damage; half of the fire damage is profane and not reduced by resistance to fire-based attacks); nine random targets per round; if fewer than

nine targets are available, the trap attacks some targets with multiple limbs

Effect *Mass hold monster* (paralysis, DC 25 Will negates, CL 17th), targets all creatures in the room that are not devils

Duration 25 rounds

Destruction AC 32; hp 55; hardness 11 (each stone limb)

Destruction AC 43; hp 99; hardness 11 (throne)

Disarm Disable Device DC 37 (each stone limb)

Disarm Disable Device DC 34 (throne)

Dispel DC 28 (throne); if successful, the trap shuts down for 1d4 rounds

CREATING ENCOUNTER TRAPS

Creating encounter traps is similar to creating monsters in many regards. This section provides general guidelines for creation, but the effect of an encounter trap must be carefully judged and compared to others to ensure it is appropriate for the assigned Challenge Rating.

First, visualize the trap's effect, draw a simple map of the area, and decide the target CR of the trap. Next, consult Table 6–1: Encounter Traps to determine statistics for your trap and make other decisions about its nature.

As the table illustrates, an encounter trap's Challenge Rating dictates many of the numbers in the trap's statistics block, including the DC of the Search check, the DC of the Disable Device check, the initiative modifier, and the duration. For traps that rely on spell effects that do not deal damage (or that deal damage as a secondary effect), the CR is generally twice the spell's level.

After selecting the basics of the trap, choose the type of attack. For most traps, this will be some sort of melee attack. Traps that rely on hazardous substances (such as burning oil or freezing liquid) use the Elemental Effects entry. Next, determine the trap's specific attack statistics using the formulas in Table 6–1. Once the average damage of the trap has been figured, appropriate dice must be assigned. When determining the average damage of any given die, divide the die's maximum roll by half and add 1/2. These values apply to the individual attacks made to every square in the attack area (which should encompass the entire room).

Each encounter trap needs destruction and disarm values for each square in the attack area. Only traps with certain disadvantages have central destruction and disarm values. Magic traps also have a dispel value for each individual attack area.

After determining all the base values, decide whether to give the trap an upgrade or an advantage to make it more deadly or harder to find, disable, or destroy. For each upgrade or advantage chosen, the trap must have a disadvantage. Disadvantages might give the trap a central disarm, destruction, or dispel location, or make it attack a larger area from a single source (allowing a larger area to be made safe with a single Disable Device check).

EXAMPLE: LIGHTNING HEXAGON TRAP

Joe, a DM, has decided to design an encounter trap to challenge his players in an upcoming session. The group is made up of 8th- and 9th-level characters, so Joe decides that a CR 8 trap is the right difficulty, especially considering that the group has never faced an encounter trap before. Joe is tired of mechanical traps and wants to build a trap around his favorite spell, *lightning bolt*. After sketching out a 40-foot-wide hexagonal room, Joe adds an entry door to the south and a locked exit to the north. To keep things interesting, he gives the door three locks and puts six keys in the room. Each key hangs from the top of a silver pillar in one of the corners, 20 feet above the floor. The pillars will also be the source of the lightning, with bolts emanating from them. Making a few more decisions and consulting the formulas in Table 6–1, Joe sketches out the trap's basic statistics.

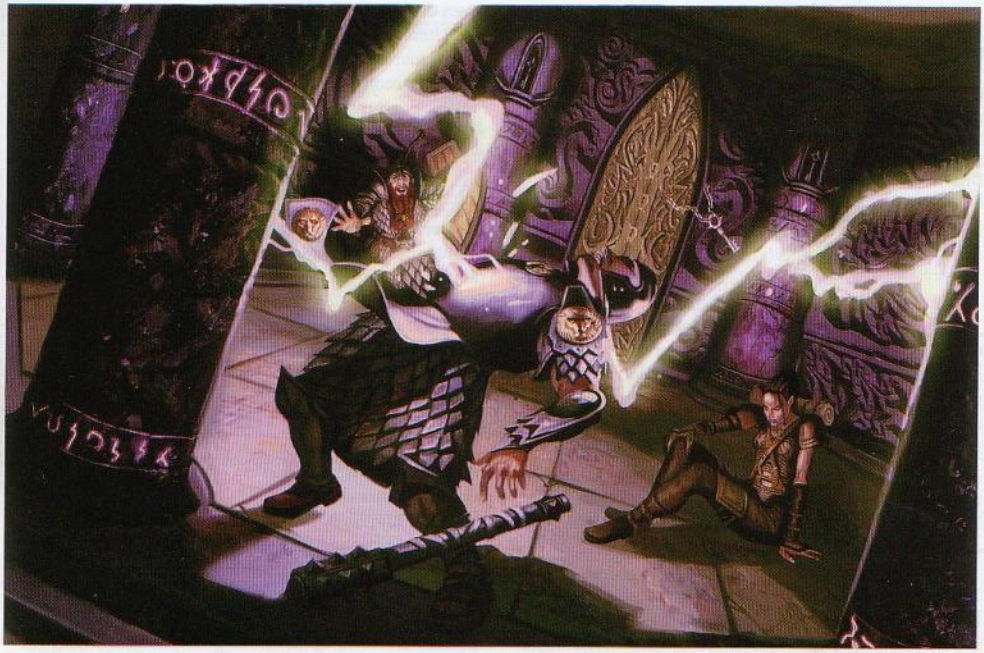
Working from the top down on Table 6–1, Joe arrives at the following determinations about his trap:

MODIFYING ENCOUNTER TRAPS

The sample encounter traps presented here make certain assumptions about the chamber that they are in, primarily size, points of entrance and exit, and focus. Any of these traps could be modified to fit a specific dungeon or adventure by altering these details. As long as the amount of damage and general statistics do not change, the trap remains at the same CR. For example, the spiked ceiling trap could be placed in a room 20 feet wide and 40 feet deep. Instead of a door on the opposite side, there could be a great iron lid, covering a concealed niche containing a treasure or needed object. None of these changes greatly affects the mechanics of the trap and would not adjust the CR.

Another method of altering encounter traps is changing how the damage is dealt. Altering a spray of cold to a jet of acid makes little difference to the trap's CR. (Switching to sonic damage might affect the CR because few creatures have resistant to sonic energy.) Instead of darts, a trap could launch small daggers or tiny skulls. This might change the type of damage from piercing to bludgeoning, but the amount of damage should remain the same.

Also, the sample traps use the creation rules as a guideline, and vary from those rules when appropriate. For example, the damage dealt by the missile crystal trap is lower than normal for a spell effect because there is no attack roll and no save is allowed. The glacial jet trap deals less damage than normal because the added effect of being knocked prone makes the trap more difficult. The prismatic doom trap hits practically the entire room every round, but a heightened *prismatic spray* is not particularly more powerful than normal. If you modify the sample traps, keep these variations in mind, and feel free to add other alterations where appropriate.



Adventurers run afoul of a lightning hexagon trap

Illus. by M. Coimbra

Type: It is a magic trap (obviously).

Detection: The trap's Search DC is 23 (15 + its CR of 8).

Trigger: Joe gives his trap a detection trigger (an *alarm* spell).

Initiative: The trap's initiative modifier is +4 (half of its CR of 8).

Effect: The trap's effect is a spell attack that deals average damage of 28 points (CR of 8 × 3-1/2). The attack's save DC, for a 3rd-level spell effect, is 14 (10 + [3 × 1-1/2].

Duration: The trap's duration is 11 rounds (3 + CR of 8).

Destruction (Location): A single attack source (one of the pillars) has AC 18 (10 + CR of 8) and 20 hit points (CR of 8 × 2-1/2).

Destruction (Entire Trap): Because of the way it's built, the trap cannot be destroyed by damaging a particular location.

Disarm (Location): A single attack source can be disarmed with a successful Disable Device check against a DC of 28 (25 + 3 for the 3rd-level spell effect).

Disarm (Entire Trap): Because of the way it's built, the trap cannot be disarmed by a successful Disable Device check that targets a particular location.

Dispel: The caster level of the trap's effect is 8th, so the DC to dispel its magic is 19 (11 + CL).

Finally, Joe decides to give his trap one upgrade and one disadvantage. Joe gives the pillars hardness 8 (equal to the trap's CR) so that they are more difficult to destroy. For the disadvantage, Joe decides that the trap does not affect every square of the room every round. Instead, each round, only one (randomly determined) pillar spews forth lightning, and that lightning travels toward the two pillars nearest to that one.

Joe's completed encounter trap looks like this.

LIGHTNING HEXAGON TRAP CR 8

Description See text
Search DC 23; **Type** Magic

Trigger Detection (*alarm*); **Init** +4
Effect *Lightning bolt* (8d6 points of damage, Reflex DC 14 half) shoots between three pillars
Duration 11 rounds

Destruction AC 18; hp 20; hardness 8 (each pillar)
Disarm Disable Device DC 28 (each pillar)
Dispel DC 19 (each pillar)

ADVANTAGES OF ENCOUNTER TRAPS

When it comes to putting them in your dungeon adventure, encounter traps have more in common with monsters than they do with standard traps. They are always part of a combat encounter by definition, and any advice that applies to building a good combat encounter applies to building a good encounter trap. The size and shape of the room, for example, are far more important when designing an encounter trap than with a standard trap. Because the process of disarming or defeating the trap is spread over several rounds of action (rather than accomplished by a single Disable Device check), it is crucial to know the position of each character, not just the location of the rogue doing the disarming.

Encounter traps cannot move, so you need to consider how they are placed. Given the choice, most adventurers would rather back out of a room that comes to life with razor-sharp saw blades—so do not give them the choice. It is easy enough to have the door slam shut when the trap is triggered, but a more subtle approach is to place something of great importance in the center of the room or at the far side. The PCs must brave the trap to retrieve the prize. You can also locate the trigger in the middle of the area the trap affects, so the PCs will need to survive the trap's attacks in order to flee. Generally, encounter traps work best when the PCs simply must deal with them to succeed at their overall goal.

That rule of thumb leads to another key difference between encounter traps and standard traps. In an ideal situation, a standard trap will be found and disabled by the party rogue without ever being triggered. When a trap does activate, the PCs often assume they failed to take the proper precautions. Encounter traps work differently; it is assumed that the party will activate them. Yes, a clever, prepared rogue might find and disarm an encounter trap before it goes off, but from a gameplay point of view, that defeats the trap's purpose. You put an encounter trap in your dungeon because you want the PCs to fight it. When the characters spring the trap, their players are indirectly rewarded with an exciting encounter, rather than a brief description and a tally of damage.

Standard traps encourage caution. The mere suggestion that an area is trapped will result in dozens of Search checks by the rogue, often bringing the game to a standstill while the other players wonder what their characters are supposed to be doing. Encounter traps, on the other hand, encourage risk—if you happen to spring one, you can always fight your way out of it somehow. The pressure is off the rogue to find and detect all traps before they can harm the party, and the time that was spent on dozens of Search checks can now be spent on a fun and interesting action scene.

Indeed, one of the key advantages of encounter traps is that they give every character something to do while the trap is being disabled. The rogue, obviously, will be hard at work disarming the trap, as might any spellcasters if the trap is magic. Fighters will be busy attacking the trap's components, while everyone will need to keep the rogue safe while she does her job. Encounter traps turn a solo scene into an exciting battle in which everyone can participate.

ENCOUNTER TRAPS AND MONSTERS

Because encounter traps act like monsters, it is easier to use them in hybrid encounters that include both. Many encounter traps include a simple portcullis that holds one or more monsters at bay; when the trap is triggered, the creatures are released into the room. Even relatively simple-minded monsters can learn the attack patterns of an encounter trap with enough training, and magic traps can be built to specifically ignore a dungeon's other guardians.

Consider using monsters that have immunity to the trap's special attack. For example, place a creature of the fire subtype in a room with a trap that sprays burning oil. Or, for a particularly nasty trap, use an attack form that heals monsters—for example, place a lightning-based trap in a room with a pair of flesh golems. Such pairings need not be part of the dungeon builder's plan. Perhaps a pack of ghouls has settled in a room equipped with an encounter trap that releases clouds of deadly poison. The ghouls are not affected, and the poison makes their prey that much easier to kill.

Encounter traps can also benefit monsters in combat by tripping, bull rushing, or otherwise hampering intruders. Canny monsters will learn to hold their attacks until the trap makes things difficult for the PCs. They might try to push the characters into the area the trap affects, possibly striving to entangle or paralyze them as well so the trap strikes them over and over again.

The following monsters are particularly suited to being paired with encounter traps.

Assassin Vine: An assassin vine can entangle an entire party in animated plants while an encounter trap strikes them repeatedly. The vine might be an interloper that discovered how to use the trap to gather fresh meat.

Golem: Because it can wait indefinitely and be given precise instructions, a golem makes a great companion for an encounter trap. Many golems are healed by a particular form of energy and are best paired with traps that utilize that energy. Golems also work well with mechanical traps, especially if the trap uses blades that are not adamantine.

Mimic: A mimic can create a false disarm location in an encounter trap room. The party rogue might end up stuck to the creature's adhesive, leaving her compatriots to fend for themselves against the trap.

Ooze: In addition to having immunity to many trap effects, oozes keep a low profile—literally. Many mechanical traps will swing right over their gooey forms, leaving the oozes free to engulf any foes still touching the ground.

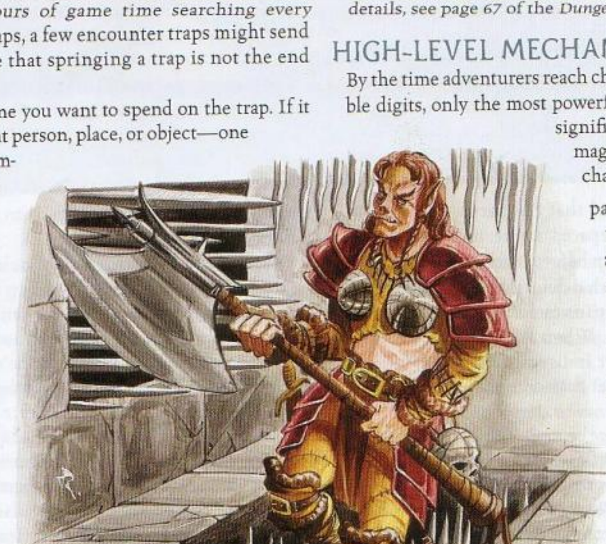
Swarm: Any swarm of Diminutive or Fine creatures has immunity to weapon damage, and thus to any encounter trap that deals such damage. Although they cannot be trained, swarms are naturally aggressive and merely need to be contained in the trap room. If the trap has a central disarm location, it might double as the swarm's nest, hindering a rogue who tries to deactivate the trap with the swarm's distraction effect.

Undead: A few undead make good guards for magic encounter traps that use mind-affecting magic, poison, energy drain, or any other effect that hampers only living creatures. For double benefit, a trap that deals negative energy damage (such as with *mass inflict light wounds*) will harm intruders while simultaneously healing the undead.

ENCOUNTER TRAPS AND STANDARD TRAPS

Standard traps still have a place in the dungeon, but remember to consider when it is appropriate to encourage caution and when it is not. If the PCs barge through every door without stopping to weigh the consequences, a few standard traps that explode in their faces might give them second thoughts. On the other hand, if the group spends hours of game time searching every square inch for traps, a few encounter traps might send them the message that springing a trap is not the end of the world.

Consider the time you want to spend on the trap. If it guards a significant person, place, or object—one that has thematic importance in your adventure—then a spectacular encounter trap might be desirable. But the treasure chest of an ordinary monster does not warrant the time spent on a complex encounter trap. Remember too that the brief time it takes to interact with a standard trap can be an advantage, such as in the case of a room filled with trapped footlockers. Treating them all as encounter traps would waste hours of game time without adding much to the overall experience.



Monsters and traps work well together

Illus. by D. Roach

In addition, standard traps can be paired with encounter traps. If your encounter trap has a central disarm location, it is entirely reasonable to protect that mechanism with a standard trap. A rogue rushing to disable a deadly collection of blades might not take the time to scour an access panel for a simple poison needle trap, which makes it all the more effective in the end. A big, flashy encounter trap might be a distraction for a more deadly trap hidden inside it.

Finally, there is something to be said for using standard traps to reward the players of rogues. An encounter with a standard trap is their chance to shine, to validate their training and preparation, and to be the hero. Placing standard traps here and there in your dungeon to give a rogue occasional time in the spotlight can go a long way toward making the player feel good about her choice of character.

NEW STANDARD TRAPS

The following traps use the standard rules for traps. For details, see page 67 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide.*

HIGH-LEVEL MECHANICAL TRAPS

By the time adventurers reach character levels in the double digits, only the most powerful standard traps pose a significant threat to them. The magical abilities of high-level characters allow them to bypass most standard traps without springing them, and traps that do activate seldom cause them serious harm. No traps in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* have a Challenge Rating higher than 10. Characters of 18th level and higher, however, do not earn XP for defeating CR 10 traps, making them something of a waste of time in such high-level games.

So, should traps be phased out at a certain point? No. Barbarians and rogues gain trap sense bonuses up through 18th level, and it would not be fair to deny them a chance to use their skills. But trapbuilders must expand their arsenals to ward off adventurers of immense power. The following strategies can be used to create and place traps so that high-level characters will need to be cautious.

Multiple Traps

Linking several independent traps to a single trigger is an easy and effective way to increase the threat of a trapped corridor. Because the traps are sprung simultaneously, they can combine effects in a way that is more dangerous to the PCs than if they were encountered separately. For example, a *power word stun* trap (CR 8, *DMG* 73) that is inscribed inside a crushing room trap (CR 10, *DMG* 74) is effective because any creature stunned by the first trap will be unable to escape being squeezed by the second. Together, these traps would be treated as a "mixed pair" encounter, for a total Encounter Level of 11. Likewise, eight linked *chain lightning* traps (CR 7 each, *DMG* 73) can pack a deadlier punch than if they were encountered separately, because the victims will not have time to heal between the traps. Together, the eight traps have an Encounter Level of 13.

Invisible Traps

Mechanical attack traps can be rendered invisible by casting *invisibility* (PH 245) and *permanency* (PH 259) on them. Creatures that cannot see invisible objects take a –20 penalty on Search checks to find invisible traps. However, they take only a –10 penalty on Disable Device checks to disarm invisible traps, because much of the art of disarming a trap is based on touch. Ranged or melee attack traps that have been rendered invisible deny their targets a Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, just as if they were invisible creatures.

Because a trap springing is technically an attack, an invisible trap that activates cancels its own *invisibility* spell. Invisibility is thus most common with traps that have a manual or repair reset, especially for ranged attacks. It is not efficient to cast *invisibility* and *permanency* on every piece of ammunition a trap holds. Similarly, pit traps and most forms of "can't miss" traps rarely benefit from invisibility.

However, it is possible to make *greater invisibility* (PH 245) permanent on a melee attack trap by casting *permanency* and expending 2,000 XP. Such a trap would retain its invisibility even after attacking, allowing it to strike repeatedly while invisible. Only automatic reset traps gain much benefit from this arrangement.

The Challenge Rating for an invisible trap increases by 1, or by 2 if the trap has *greater invisibility* and is a melee attack trap. The costs in Table 6–6 (page 131) assume that the trapbuilder hired an NPC spellcaster to cast the spells needed. If the trapbuilder can cast the spells herself, the process is free except for the XP costs.

Greater Poison

Poison can make any trap deadly, but some trapbuilders find that commonly available venom lacks the lethal force they require. By harvesting poison from only the largest and most powerful monsters, they can increase their traps' potency—at a dramatic increase in cost. Still, to the masters of trapbuilding, the extra expense is more than worth it.

Greater poison comes from monsters that have advanced in size beyond their most common form. Advances in size increase the creature's Constitution score, which in turn increases the DC of the Fortitude save against its poison. Many poisons in Table 6–2: Greater Poisons come from monsters that have grown in size, while others come from mighty but less commonly found creatures.

Table 6–2: Greater Poisons

Name	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Trap CR	Cost
Bonespear poison fusion[FF]	Injury DC 25	2d4 Str + 2d4 Dex	2d4 Str + 2d4 Dex	+6	3,100 gp
Centipede poison, Colossal	Injury DC 23	2d6 Dex	2d6 Dex	+4	900 gp
Conflagration ooze essence[MM3]	Contact DC 19	1d4 Con + 2d4 hp (fire)[1]	1d4 Con + 2d4 hp (fire)[1]	+4	850 gp
Greensickness[MM3]	Inhaled DC 33	2d6 Str + 1d4 Con	2d6 Str + 1d4 Con	+7	4,000 gp
Megapede poison[MM2]	Injury DC 44	2d6 Con + 1d4 Dex	2d6 Con + 1d4 Dex	+11	24,000 gp
Pit fiend venom	Injury DC 27	1d6 Con	Death	+9	30,000 gp
Purple worm poison, Colossal	Injury DC 27	1d6 Str	2d6 Str	+5	1,400 gp
Scorpion venom, Gargantuan	Injury DC 23	1d8 Con	1d8 Con	+5	3,300 gp
Scorpion venom, Colossal	Injury DC 33	1d10 Con	1d10 Con	+8	9,900 gp
Shrieking terror saliva[MM3]	Injury DC 19	Unable to heal injury[2]	—	+1	5,000 gp
Spider venom, Gargantuan	Injury DC 20	2d6 Str	2d6 Str	+4	850 gp
Spider venom, Colossal	Injury DC 28	2d8 Str	2d8 Str	+6	1,900 gp
Svaklor venom[MM3]	Injury DC 24	Paralysis	1d4 Con	+6	3,500 gp
Svaklor venom, greater[MM3]	Injury DC 34	Paralysis	1d6 Con	+9	8,000 gp
Wyvern poison, Huge	Injury DC 19	2d6 Con	2d6 Con	+6	4,000 gp
Wyvern poison, Gargantuan	Injury DC 21	2d6 Con	2d6 Con	+7	5,000 gp

FF: *Fiend Folio*; MM2: *Monster Manual II*; MM3: *Monster Manual III*.

1: Conflagration ooze essence deals fire damage in addition to Constitution damage. Creatures that have immunity to poison still must save to avoid taking damage. Creatures that have immunity to fire still must save to avoid taking Constitution damage.

2: Damage from the injury that introduced the poison into the victim's body cannot be healed magically or naturally. A *neutralize poison* or *heal* spell removes the effect, and *delay poison* allows magical healing while in effect.

Increased Weapon Size

The standard trap rules assume the use of Medium weapons when creating ranged or melee attack traps, but skilled trapbuilders who have the money and the space can craft traps that use Large, Huge, or Gargantuan weapons. These weapon traps deal greater base damage. For example, a Huge greatsword trap deals 4d6 points of damage.

Traps that use larger weapons allow the builder to give his trap a higher Strength bonus—indeed, they require it. Without higher Strength, the trap will not be able to swing the larger weapon and will fail to spring. Table 6–3 below summarizes the minimum and maximum Strength bonuses that can be given to a trap based on its weapon size. The Strength bonus on damage does not change whether the weapon is light, one-handed, or two-handed. The trap is considered to swing its weapon one-handed, and it never doubles the Strength bonus if it uses a two-handed weapon. The degree of power used to swing or shoot the weapon imparts it with an inherent ability to penetrate armor as well. As a result, traps that use larger weapons have a minimum attack bonus. Traps cannot be built to have an attack bonus lower than that listed for their weapon size.

Traps that use larger weapons require plenty of room in which to operate. To activate properly, the trap needs an open space of a certain size or larger. In effect, the trap cannot be placed to attack a space in a room smaller than the listed minimum space.

Using a larger weapon does not increase the Challenge Rating of a trap, except in that it increases the damage dealt. The increases in cost can be high, however, as shown on Table 6–5.

TABLE 6–3: TRAP PROPERTIES BY WEAPON SIZE

	Ranged		Melee		Min.	Min. Space
Weapon Size	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Attack	Required
Diminutive	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	1 ft. × 1 ft.
Tiny	+0	+1	+0	+2	+0	2 ft. × 2 ft.
Small	+0	+2	+0	+4	+0	5 ft. × 5 ft.
Medium	+0	+4	+0	+8	+0	5 ft. × 5 ft.
Large	+2	+6	+4	+12	+3	5 ft. × 10 ft.
Huge	+4	+8	+8	+16	+6	5 ft. × 15 ft.
Gargantuan	+6	+10	+12	+20	+8	10 ft. × 20 ft.
Colossal	+8	+12	+16	+24	+8	10 ft. × 25 ft.

Magic Weapons

Traps can be built to use magic weapons for melee or ranged attacks. For ranged attack traps, the projectile launcher, not the ammunition, is always the magic weapon.

Magic weapons that have enhancement bonuses but no special abilities do not increase a trap's Challenge Rating, except in that they increase the average damage dealt by the trap. Traps that use magic weapons cannot be built to have an attack bonus lower than the enhancement bonus of the weapon. If the trap uses a weapon larger than Medium, the trap cannot have an attack bonus lower than the minimum attack bonus based on the weapon size plus the weapon's enhancement bonus.

If a magic weapon used in a trap has a special quality that does not deal damage (such as being a keen weapon or a ghost touch weapon), the CR of the trap increases based on the value of the abilities. For every +2 of special qualities, the trap's CR increases by 1. Qualities that only deal damage, such as that of a flaming weapon, are counted only for the average damage of the weapon.

The cost of a magic weapon is separate from the price of the trap. Simply add the market price of the magic weapon to the final price of the trap. Removing a magic weapon from a trap constitutes breaking the weapon and destroys the magic of both the weapon and the trap.

Multiple Attacks

A melee attack trap can make multiple attacks with the same weapon, slashing back and forth at careless adventurers before resuming its reset position. Each successive attack after the first is made with a cumulative –5 penalty on the attack roll, and the trap can make as many attacks as its attack bonus divided by 7 (rounded down, maximum 4). If the trap is also poisoned, the poison is effective only on the first attack that strikes a target, after which the blade is not envenomed again until the trap resets.

The Challenge Rating of a trap that makes multiple attacks increases by 2. However, when calculating the trap's average damage to determine the trap's CR and cost, count the damage of the weapon only once. Traps that make multiple attacks are favored in situations when magic weapons are used, and they also take up less room than would multiple redundant traps.

Special Weapon Materials

As adventurers grow in power, many of them gain spells or magic items that grant damage reduction. Melee and ranged attack traps can be improved by using weapon materials that overcome the most common forms of damage reduction. In all cases, the cost given for ranged attack traps is enough for a supply of 50 arrows, bolts, darts, or whatever form of ammunition is used.

Weapons that are made of adamantine, cold iron, or silver do not add to the trap's Challenge Rating, but they do add to the cost.

Enhanced Trap Creation

Table 6–4, Table 6–5, and Table 6–6 below expand the possibilities for powerful mechanical traps, and they include the costs associated with some of the options presented above. Use these tables in conjunction with Table 3–13, Table 3–14, Table 3–15, and Table 3–16 on pages 74 and 75 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Table 6–4:
Additional CR Modifiers for Mechanical Traps

Feature	CR Modifier
*Attack Bonus (Melee or Ranged Attack Trap)**	
+30 to +40	+3
+41 to +50	+4
Magic Weapons	
Special qualities worth +1 or +2	+1
Special qualities worth +3 or +4	+2
Special qualities worth +5	+3
Miscellaneous Features	
Invisible, ranged or melee	+1
Invisible (greater), melee	+2
Multiple melee attack	+2
Poison, greater	Varies

*Includes any enhancement bonuses from magic weapons.

Table 6–5:
Additional Cost Modifiers for Mechanical Traps

Feature	Base Cost Modifier
Damage Bonus	
Ranged, +0 to +4	+100 gp × bonus
Ranged, +5 to +8	+200 gp × bonus
Ranged, +9 to +12	+300 gp × bonus
Melee, +0 to +8	+100 gp × bonus
Melee, +9 to +12	+200 gp × bonus
Melee, +13 to +18	+300 gp × bonus
Melee, +19 to +24	+400 gp × bonus
Multiple melee attack	+100 gp × number of attacks
Weapon Size	
Large	+100 gp
Huge	+200 gp
Gargantuan	+300 gp
Colossal	+400 gp

Table 6–6: Extra Costs for Mechanical Traps

Feature	Extra Cost
Invisibility	+5,510 gp
Invisibility, greater	+10,730 gp
Magic weapon	As cost of magic weapon
Poison, greater	Varies
Special Weapon Materials	
Adamantine melee weapon	+3,000 gp
Adamantine ammunition	+60 (+1,200 if auto reset)
Alchemical silver weapon	+180 gp
Cold iron weapon	+50 gp (+2,000 gp if also magic)

SAMPLE HIGH-LEVEL MECHANICAL TRAPS

Greater Wyvern Arrow Trap: CR 11; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +24 ranged (1d8+4 plus poison, arrow); poison (Gargantuan wyvern poison, Fort DC 21 resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 24. *Market Price:* 77,600 gp.

Lasting Pain Trap: CR 11; mechanical, location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +36 ranged (1d8+5 plus 1d6 electricity plus poison, *+1 shocking arrow*); poison (shrieking terror saliva, Fort DC 19 resists, unable to heal wound caused by trap magically or naturally); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 30. *Market Price:* 230,450 gp.

Large Flaming Greataxe Trap: CR 12; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +30 melee (3d6+13 plus 1d6 fire, Large *+1 flaming greataxe*); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 30. *Market Price:* 367,600 gp.

Greensickness Spore Trap: CR 13; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; gas; never miss; onset delay (1 round); poison (greensickness, Fort DC 33 resists, 2d6 Str + 1d4 Con/2d6 Str + 1d4 Con); multiple targets (all in 10-ft.-by-10-ft. room); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Market Price:* 69,000 gp.

Huge Unholy Greatsword Trap: CR 15; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +39 melee (4d6+19 plus 2d6 unholy, Huge *+3 unholy greatsword*); Search DC 36; Disable Device DC 36. *Market Price:* 258,850 gp.

Slashing Deathblade Trap: CR 16; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +35/+30/+25/+20 melee (2d4+9 plus poison, *+1 adamantine scythe*); poison (deathblade, Fort DC 20 resists, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con, one dose per triggering); Search DC 38; Disable Device DC 29. *Market Price:* 245,600 gp.

Rain of Arrows Trap: CR 16; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +34 ranged (1d8+4 plus poison, arrow); poison (Colossal scorpion venom, Fort DC 33 resists, 1d10 Con/1d10 Con); multiple targets (1d8 arrows per target in 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 38; Disable Device DC 24. *Market Price:* 367,600 gp.

Deadly Needle Trap: CR 17; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +48 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (pit fiend venom, Fort DC 27 resists, 1d6

SEARCH AND DISABLE DEVICE DCS

Why is it that traps do not gain higher Challenge Ratings for having Search DCs and Disable Device DCs that are higher than 20? As adventurers grow in power, they are more likely to avoid traps altogether, such as by flying over pressure triggers. After a certain level, there is a point of diminishing returns on extremely high DCs. A Search DC of 45 and a Search DC of 172 are essentially the same to a rogue who has a Search modifier of +21. Likewise, an extremely high Disable Device DC results in characters bypassing traps rather than risk disarming them. And if the higher DC does not make a trap more deadly, the PCs should not gain additional XP for defeating it.

You should keep Search DCs and Disable Device DCs on pace with your PCs' level, however, or traps will soon hold no challenge whatsoever. A good rule of thumb is that a trap should have a Search DC or Disable Device DC equal to or higher than its CR + 10, or it will be a trivial nuisance at best.

Traps that require such high skill check results are best placed in areas that the PCs should logically search, such as the base of an altar. Otherwise, use the traps to spice up encounter areas. Randomly hitting the PCs with traps as they walk down every dungeon hallway merely breeds paranoia and slows the game to a crawl.

Con/death); Search DC 39; Disable Device DC 32. *Market Price:* 278,200 gp.

Glaive of Doom Trap: CR 25; mechanical, location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +45/+40/+35/+30 melee (3d8+17 plus poison, Huge cold iron *+1 glaive*); poison (megapede poison, Fort DC 44 resists, 2d6 Con + 1d4 Dex/2d6 Con + 1d4 Dex; one dose per triggering); Search DC 55; Disable Device DC 50. *Market Price:* 1,102,808 gp.

HIGH-LEVEL MAGIC TRAPS

Because magic traps are so powerful already, it is more difficult to increase their potency than it is to enhance mechanical traps. Some techniques have been developed, however.

Ethereal Traps

Magic traps can be placed on the Ethereal Plane, as long as a visual trigger is used. (Traps located on the Ethereal Plane can "see" into the Material Plane, just as ethereal creatures can.) Since the trap is intended to affect creatures on the Material Plane, however, an *ethereal jaunt* (PH 227) effect must be added to the trap.

When an ethereal trap is triggered, it shunts itself to the Material Plane and immediately casts its spell. On the following round, it returns to the Ethereal Plane and resets. Ethereal traps can be disabled only by ethereal creatures, and they can be found only if the searching character can see into the Ethereal Plane.

Ethereal traps cannot have a CR of less than 8, due to the use of *ethereal jaunt* in their construction. If this feature is added to a trap that has a CR of 7 or lower, the trap's CR increases to 8.

Intelligent Triggers

Blurring the line between a trap and a construct, magic traps can be given intelligence in the same manner as any magic item. The cost, level of intelligence, and powers gained vary from trap to trap (*DMG* 269), but a minimum caster level of 15 is needed to create an intelligent trap. Intelligent traps can choose when to activate themselves, based on their sensory input and personal preference. Dungeon builders who wish to avoid killing accidental intruders prize intelligent traps for their ability to judge whether a target is a threat or not.

The increase in the CR for an intelligent trap is dictated by the highest form of communication they are capable of using: +1 for empathy traps, +2 for speech traps, and +3 for telepathy traps.

Metamagic Traps

Spells cast by traps can benefit from metamagic as easily as can spells cast by living creatures. The most powerful spells require spell slots above 9th level to be cast as metamagic spells, and such slots are available only to characters above 21st level. For the purpose of determining trap cost, spells affected by metamagic are treated as being the level of the slot needed to cast them.

Multiple Spells

A single magic trap can include several spells that are triggered simultaneously. Such traps have a CR equal to a group of traps encountered together. For example, a trap that produces four *meteor swarm* spells at once (each normally a CR 10 trap) has a total CR of 14.

Table 6–7: Additional CR Modifiers for Magic Traps

Feature	CR Modifier
Ethereal	+1 (not less than CR 8)
Intelligent	
Empathy-using	+1
Speech-using	+2
Telepathy-using	+3
Metamagic	As new spell level

SAMPLE HIGH-LEVEL MAGIC TRAPS

Maximized Meteor Swarm Trap: CR 13; magic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; Atk +12/+12/+12/+12 ranged touch; spell effect (maximized *meteor swarm*, 24th-level wizard, 12 points of bludgeoning damage and 36 points of fire damage per hit, 36 points of fire damage to all creatures within 40 ft. of each hit [Reflex DC 28 half]); Search DC 37; Disable Device DC 37. *Cost:* 166,500 gp, 13,320 XP.

Sucking Void Trap: CR 14; magic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); ethereal (*ethereal jaunt*); automatic reset; spell effect (*greater dispel magic*, 17th-level cleric, targeted dispel, dispel check +17), spell effect (*energy drain*, 17th-level cleric, bestows 2d4 negative levels); spell effect (*implosion*, 17th-level cleric, death, Fort DC 23 negates); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34. *Cost:* 272,000 gp, 21,760 XP.

Intelligent Empowered Polar Ray Trap: CR 17; magic; intelligent trigger (120 ft. darkvision, blindsense, and hearing), automatic reset; Atk +11/+11/+11 ranged touch; spell effect (three empowered *polar rays*, 21st-level wizard, 21d6 points of cold damage (×1-1/2) each); lesser powers (3/day: *hold person* [DC 14], *zone of truth* [DC 13]; 1/day: *major image* [DC 14]); greater power (at will: *detect thoughts* [DC 13]); Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 10, Ego 13; Search DC 36; Disable Device DC 36. Cost: 417,900 gp, 33,432 XP.

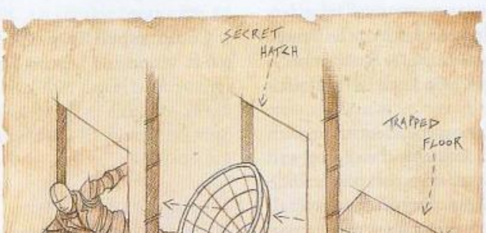
NEW COMPLEX TRAPS

Some traps, whether mechanical or magic, have complicated triggering methods or results that are not obvious from a short statistics block. These complex traps require more description, and often a diagram, to be used properly. Several such traps are presented below.

Antimagic Trap

This magic trap can be placed by itself, but more often it is included as part of another trap, obstacle, or monster encounter. When triggered, it blankets a 10-foot radius area with an *antimagic field* (PH 200), which persists for 110 minutes (after which the trap automatically resets). Antimagic traps are often paired with deadly mechanical traps, creating combinations that deny intruders their magical defenses before striking them hard with mundane blades. Dungeon builders like antimagic traps because they breathe new life into mechanical traps that would otherwise be circumvented easily by magic-laden PCs. Even a simple pit trap can be a serious obstacle to adventurers who stopped carrying mundane climbing equipment when they gained the ability to fly. An encounter that consists of an antimagic trap and a mechanical trap has an Encounter Level as if the two were a mixed pair (*DMG* 49). Cleverness is the key to using an antimagic trap well; the trap does not injure intruders, so it is necessary to be creative when pairing it with other effects.

Antimagic traps can also be used in situations where the sudden absence of magic dramatically alters an obstacle. For example, a wizard uses *polymorph any object* to permanently turn a magma paraelemental into a large stone bridge over a dangerous 30-foot-wide lava pit. He then installs an antimagic trap on the wall, set to activate if any creature reaches the center of the pit, whether by walking or flying. Anyone on the bridge when the trap goes off will fall into the lava as the *polymorph any object* spell is suppressed and the bridge turns back into an elemental (which also falls into the lava). Anyone using magic to fly overhead will drop down into the lava as well. The victims would have to escape from the lava without magical protection from the molten rock, while fighting off the angry magma paraelemental that fell into the pit with them.



Dungeon builders also add antimagic traps to monster rooms, forcing intruders to battle deadly creatures without the use of spells or magic items. Greater antimagic traps that cover a 40-foot-radius area are more commonly used in conjunction with larger monsters that require bigger rooms. Wizards can save the cost of constructing a mechanical trap to release the monster by penning it in using permanent *wall of force* spells, which are suppressed when the antimagic trap takes effect.

Some wizards have experimented with chains of interrelated traps to cover large swaths of a dungeon with an *antimagic field*. A *dancing lights* spell is added to each trap in the sequence, activating a moment before the *antimagic field* spell. Because the antimagic field suppresses the *dancing lights*, only a momentary flash of light is seen. One trap is set with the visual trigger to activate when it sees a creature, or when it sees the *dancing lights* of another trap on either side of it. Thus, when one trap is sprung, it starts a chain reaction, activating each trap in turn. In this way, an entire corridor of mechanical traps or a massive room filled with dungeon monsters can be covered in an *antimagic field* in moments.

Antimagic Trap: CR 7; magic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect (*antimagic field*, 11th-level wizard, 10-ft.-radius antimagic emanation for 110 minutes); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost*: 66,000 gp, 2,640 XP.

Antimagic Trap, Greater: CR 10; magic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect (widened *antimagic field*, 17th-level wizard, 20-ft.-radius antimagic emanation for 170 minutes); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34. *Cost*: 127,500 gp, 5,100 XP.

Antimagic Trap, Chain: CR 7; magic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; spell effect (*antimagic field*, 11th-level wizard, 10-ft.-radius antimagic emanation for 110 minutes), spell effect (*dancing lights*, 11th-level wizard); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost*: 68,500 gp, 2,740 XP.

Catapult Trap

Designed to eject an intruder from the dungeon in a most dramatic way, a catapult trap can be placed in any 10-foot-wide corridor. The trigger varies, usually activating the trap when a creature enters the far side of the trap area (so that the creature and anyone behind him are affected). Sometimes, however, the trap activates when a false door at the end of the corridor is touched, affecting anyone standing right in front of it.

When the trap is activated, one of the side walls of the corridor slides back and the floor tilts dramatically. Any creature in the 15-foot-by-10-foot trap area must attempt a DC 30 Reflex save. Those who succeed can cling to the tilted floor, but those who fail are violently dumped though the open wall panel and fall 20 feet into a secret chamber, landing hard in the 10-foot-diameter bucket of a catapult (and taking 2d6 points of damage in the process).

When any object or creature is deposited in the bucket, the second part of the trap activates, opening a hatch in the chamber that leads to the outside of the dungeon. Characters can exit the catapult bucket before the hatch

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finishes opening by making a successful DC 24 Reflex save. As soon as the hatch opens fully, however, the catapult is released, flinging anything still in the bucket out of the dungeon and 2,000 feet through the air. Victims take 20d6 points of damage when they hit the ground.

Once the catapult fires, it winds itself back (taking a full round to do so), and the hatch closes. Characters who got out of the bucket before the catapult fired can climb back up into the corridor with a successful DC 10 Climb check, but a fall will dump them back into the catapult bucket, activating the second part of the trap again. The sliding wall leading to the corridor shuts when the hatch closes, but it can be opened easily from the catapult chamber.

Catapult traps can be installed only near the surface of a dungeon, but they are popular in dungeons that are inside mountains or cliffs, where even the deepest levels are still relatively close to open air. The catapult hatch blends in with the surrounding terrain to prevent ejected intruders from using it to return to the dungeon, but it can be located from the outside with a successful DC 24 Search check. The hatch locks when it closes (Open Lock DC 30) and is often trapped somehow.

A catapult trap is actually two dependent traps with separate CRs. If the PCs avoid or disable the sliding wall trap, they never encounter the true catapult trap (and do not receive XP for defeating it). Because the true catapult trap is located in a separate chamber, a rogue cannot access it from the original corridor. She can search for or disable only the sliding wall trap.

Sliding Wall Trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 30 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6 points of falling damage); multiple targets (all within a 10-ft.-by-15 ft. area); Search DC 29, Disable Device DC 24. *Market Price:* 28,400 gp.

Catapult Trap: CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex DC 24 avoids; 2,000 ft. thrown (20d6 points of falling damage); multiple targets (all within a 10-ft.-by-10 ft. area); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 15. *Market Price:* 23,080 gp.

Counterspell Trap

This magic trap is particularly frustrating to spellcasters because it effectively ruins most attempts to use magic. The trap is essentially a standard *greater dispel magic* trap, except for the manner in which it is triggered. Rather than having a proximity trigger or a visual trigger, the trap is an intelligent magic item that controls its own activation. The trap has Int 13, Wis 13, and Cha 10 and can see and hear up to 60 feet. It has 10 ranks in Spellcraft and Spot, giving it a total bonus of +11 in each skill. The trap can communicate by empathy with a creature that is touching it, though it does so rarely.

Rather than activating as soon it sees an intruder, the trap waits until a creature casts a spell. It then uses its *greater dispel magic* effect to counterspell any spellcasting that occurs within its visual range (CL 15th). The trap must make a dispel check to successfully counter a spell, just as if it were an enemy spellcaster. Once the *greater dispel magic* has been cast, the trap resets in 1 round.

If the PCs face a counterspell trap as part of a combat encounter, roll initiative for it as you would any other participant. It usually attempts to counter the first spell it detects each round, but the trap is capable of holding off in certain circumstances. For example, if it has already seen that a group of intruders has more than one spellcaster, it might forgo countering a lower-level spell to wait for another caster to attempt a spell of greater power. Likewise, if the trap uses its Spellcraft skill to determine that an intruder's spell will be ineffective—such as if a PC casts *fireball* when the trap knows that the monsters in the room have immunity to fire—it will continue to ready its counterspell.

Disabling a counterspell trap destroys the mind behind its activation.

Counterspell Trap: CR 7; magic; intelligent trigger (60-ft. vision and hearing); automatic reset; magic effect (*greater dispel magic*, 15th-level wizard, counterspells, dispel check +15); Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10, Ego 4; Spellcraft +11, Spot +11; Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost:* 57,000 gp, 4,080 XP.

Feeding Chute Trap

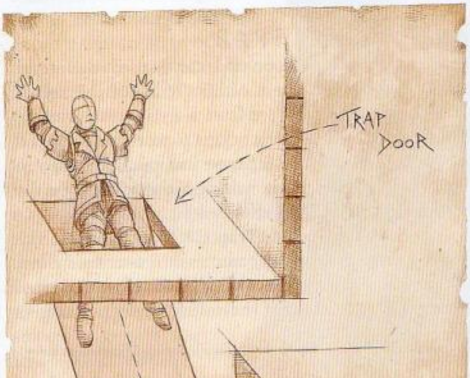
This trap is both deadly and efficient, using a mechanical trap to provide a food source for one or more monsters in the form of unwary adventurers. The mechanism consists of a hidden trapdoor in the floor of a dungeon corridor that opens under more than 50 pounds of weight. Beneath the trapdoor is a smooth, 10-foot-diameter tube coated with slippery lard. Any character weighing more than 50 pounds who enters the trap's space must make a successful DC 22 Reflex save or be dumped prone into the greased tube. Creatures that are bigger than Large cannot fit in the tube and can climb out easily (Climb DC 5). Creatures that are smaller than Medium, however, find themselves sliding down the lard-covered chute at an alarming speed.

The chute extends for a variable distance, possibly including turns and bends, before opening into a large room. The greased chute propels the character 10 feet into the room, dealing him 1d6 points of damage. (A successful Tumble check can negate this damage, as can any effect that reduces or eliminates damage from falling.) At the end of the fall, the subject is prone.

Although the greased chute is annoying, it is not the true threat. Instead, the room into which the chute deposits the victim is the lair of a monster—an owlbear, a hydra, or a similarly voracious eater—that has been fed by the chutes its whole life. A bell attached to the original trapdoor jingles in the lair whenever the trap is activated. The dungeon keepers drop all food for the beast into the chute, so it is conditioned to expect meat when it hears the bell (Listen DC –5 while in the lair). As a result, when a careless adventurer springs the trap, the monster immediately rouses itself and waits by the chute for a meal. This preparation grants the monster a surprise round, which occurs the moment that the subject is ejected from the tube. The monster can attack immediately in this surprise round, possibly making attacks of opportunity if the subject is expelled through its threatened area.

It is possible to climb back up the lard-covered chute, though the ascent is difficult (Climb DC 30 for Medium or Small creatures, or Climb DC 20 for Large creatures). Sometimes, several feeding chute traps in different areas of a dungeon will lead to the same lair, allowing the builders to use the same monster to protect multiple entrance paths.

Feeding Chute: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex DC 22 avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6 points of falling damage); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 22. *Market Price:* 2,900 gp.



Retracting Bridge Trap

This cunning trap tricks intruders into trusting an easy path across a dangerous obstacle, and then punishes them for their gullibility. The trap is placed in a 20-foot-wide corridor that is bisected by a pit 40 feet deep and 30 feet wide. The pit is filled to a depth of 20 feet with churning water. The trap consists of a stone bridge across the water pit. The bridge is only 3 feet wide and has no railings, but it appears sturdy to casual inspection. Thanks to stonecunning, a dwarf has a chance to notice that the bridge is unsafe just by coming within 10 feet of it.

The trigger for the trap is a pressure plate located immediately on the opposite side of the bridge, so that anyone walking off the bridge normally will step on it. When activated, the trap pulls the bridge back quickly, dumping anyone standing on it into the water unless he or she makes a successful DC 29 Reflex save. Those who succeed cling to the bridge as it retracts, and must pull themselves back up to the starting side of the pit with a successful DC 15 Climb check. Anyone who fails this check by 5 or more falls into the water. The trap resets and extends the bridge again 1 hour after it is sprung.

Variants of this trap add a 1-round delay between the triggering of the pressure plate and the bridge retraction to fool cautious adventurers who wait until the bridge's safety is "confirmed" by a successful crossing. Trapbuilders also might fill the pit with something other than water, such as acid (immersion causes 10d6 points of acid damage per round), lava (immersion causes 20d6 points of fire damage per round), or simply a dangerous monster.

Retracting Bridge: CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets (all creatures in a 20-ft.-by-5-ft. area), retracting bridge (dumps into water, Reflex DC 29 to cling to bridge as it retracts, Climb DC 15 to return to edge of pit); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 24. *Market Price:* 50,400 gp (with water).

BOON TRAPS

Traditionally, magic traps are designed to harm or hamper intruders, but it is possible to build magic traps that provide a benefit. These boon traps have little use in most dungeons unless they are paired with a guardian monster. With a little planning, the trap can bolster or heal the creature, keeping the dungeon owner's guardian alive longer during a fight.

Boon traps are constructed as any other magic trap with a visual trigger, but using a spell that enhances a creature rather than harms it. When activated, a boon trap does not necessarily target the creature that triggered it—after all, it would be counterproductive to cast *bull's strength* on an intruder. Instead, the trap uses *read magic* (PH 269) to find a creature within line of sight that bears a particular *arcane mark* (PH 201), as determined by the trapbuilder. The trap automatically targets the nearest creature that has the correct *arcane*

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mark scribed directly on its body. Marks on clothing or equipment are not sufficient. If the trap's effect can target multiple creatures, it targets as many as it can "see" up to its maximum, starting with the nearest. Boon traps constructed to use touch spells are usually built into the floor so that the target creature can stand on them to receive the effect.

Like most permanent magic traps, a boon trap can be built to reset automatically, as often as once a round. As long as it sees any creatures with the proper *arcane mark*, the trap will continue to be sprung whenever it resets. Some trapbuilders deliberately increase the reset time of their boon traps to prevent other creatures from using them over and over should they defeat the guardian monster.

Creatures placed in a dungeon with a boon trap are usually trained or commanded to stay close to it during battle so that the trap can target them repeatedly. A group of intelligent monsters can synchronize their movements so that a different creature is closest to the trap each round, allowing them all to receive the benefits of the trap.

Nonliving monsters such as undead or constructs can bear an *arcane mark* permanently, but living creatures must renew theirs each month to keep it from fading. The *arcane mark* can be made invisible, but the trap will not see the mark unless someone adds *see invisibility* (PH 275) or *true seeing* (PH 296) to the trap.

Building Boon Traps: The price and CR of a boon trap is calculated in the same way as any other magic trap with a spell of the same level and a visual trigger (*DMG* 74). The trap incorporates an additional *read magic* trigger, however, which increases the construction cost by 250 gp and 20 XP (for a trap with an automatic reset function) or by 25 gp and 2 XP (for a one-shot trap).

Summoning Traps: Boon traps can be used to great effect with magic traps that summon monsters, allowing a dungeon builder to create an entire encounter, complete with monsters and support magic, to respond to intruders. However, boon traps cannot distinguish the summoned monsters from the intruders without an *arcane mark*. This problem has prompted wizards to add an *arcane mark* function to their summoning traps. When the trap is sprung, a monster is summoned and immediately branded with an *arcane mark*, which will be recognized by the boon trap.

Adding an *arcane mark* effect to a summoning trap increases the construction cost by 250 gp and 20 XP (for a trap with an automatic reset function) or by 25 gp and 2 XP (for a one-shot trap). The following sample trap summons a fiendish dire wolverine and casts *arcane mark* on it.

Summon Monster V Trap: CR 6; magic; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; magic effect (*summon monster V*, 9th-level wizard, fiendish dire wolverine); magic effect (*arcane mark*, 1st-level wizard, inscribes rune on summoned monster); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost*: 4,700 gp, 1,820 XP.

SAMPLE BOON TRAPS

The following sample boon traps can be used in conjunction with various monsters. Although they can be created using spells lower than 3rd level, they almost never are. Boon traps require a visual trigger to work properly, and the lowest-level spell that can serve that function is *clairvoyance*. Few trapbuilders are willing to spend more on the trigger than on the spell effect.

Cure Serious Wounds Trap: CR 4; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, clairvoyance*); automatic reset; magic effect (*cure serious wounds*, 7th-level bard, heals 3d8+7 points of damage, Will DC 14 half [harmless]); selective targets

COMMANDEERING BOON TRAPS

A magic device that casts a beneficial spell at will is always of use to adventurers. Once the PCs overcome the initial threat of the boon trap and its companion monsters, they will likely try to use the trap's benefits for themselves. This control can be an exciting reward for the characters, allowing them limited access to a powerful magical effect. Unfettered use of boon traps, however, can flood a campaign with too much magical power.

Remember first that boon traps are part of the dungeon architecture and are immobile. Removing them effectively destroys them, breaking the magic that was infused into the walls or floor. Most boon traps are located deep in dungeons, and the PCs will find it inefficient to mount an expedition every time they need the trap's spell. Of course, the characters are free to use the boon trap while exploring the same dungeon, though they must return to the trap's room to do so. Spells that have durations measured in rounds will probably expire before the adventurers return to where they left off.

Furthermore, PCs who want to use a boon trap must find a way to fool the trap's *read magic* ability. By examining the trap and making a successful DC 16 Spellcraft check, a character can determine that the trap targets a creature within range that bears a specific *arcane mark*. The exact symbol must be discovered separately, probably by examining the corpse of the guardian monster. Activating the trap requires scribing a duplicate *arcane mark* on the PCs. (In the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, forging another wizard's personal rune is considered a despicable act, punishable by a curse from the deity Azuth, and is usually not worth whatever power the boon trap holds.) Once the *arcane mark* has been properly placed, its bearer is free to activate the boon trap, benefiting from the magic as many times as he is willing to return to the trap.

Finally, remember that the trapbuilder sets the reset time for the trap. If she has reason to fear that her boon trap might be commandeered by intruders, she will set the trap to reset after 24 hours, diminishing its value to anyone but the dungeon's rightful occupants. A boon trap that can heal a PC once per round is useful, but a trap that can do so only once per day is less important.

(*arcane marked* creatures); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Cost:* 21,250 gp, 1,700 XP.

Haste Trap: CR 4; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, clairvoyance*); automatic reset; magic effect (*haste*, 5th-level wizard, Fortitude DC 14 negates [harmless]); multiple selective targets (up to five *arcane marked* creatures within 30 ft. of each other); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Cost:* 15,250 gp, 1,220 XP.

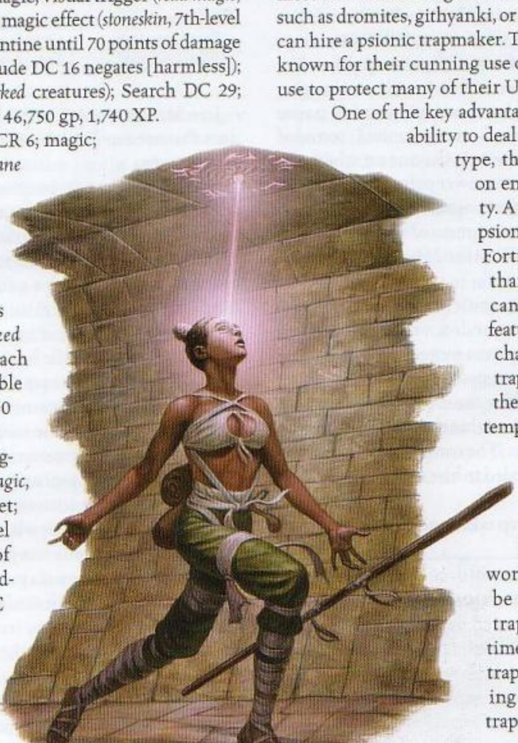
Stoneskin Trap: CR 5; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, clairvoyance*); automatic reset; magic effect (*stoneskin*, 7th-level wizard, grants DR 10/adamantine until 70 points of damage have been prevented, Fortitude DC 16 negates [harmless]); selective target (*arcane marked* creatures); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 46,750 gp, 1,740 XP.

Animal Growth Trap: CR 6; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, arcane eye*); automatic reset; magic effect (*animal growth*, 9th-level wizard, increases size, Fortitude DC 17 negates [harmless]); multiple selective targets (up to four *arcane marked* animals within 30 ft. of each other); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost:* 36,750 gp, 2,940 XP.

Heal Trap: CR 7; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, true seeing*); automatic reset; magic effect (*heal*, 11th-level cleric, heals 110 points of damage, removes many adverse conditions, Will DC 19 negates [harmless]); selective targets (*arcane marked* creatures); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost:* 80,750 gp, 4,460 XP.

Mass Bear's Endurance Trap: CR 7; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, clairvoyance*); automatic reset; magic effect (*mass bear's endurance*, 13th-level wizard, grants +4 enhancement bonus to Constitution, Will DC 19 negates [harmless]); multiple selective targets (up to 13 *arcane marked* creatures within 30 ft. of each other); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. Cost: 40,750 gp, 3,260 XP.

Mass Cure Critical Wounds Trap: CR 9; magic; visual trigger (*read magic, true seeing*); automatic reset; magic effect (*mass cure critical wounds*, 15th-level cleric, heals 4d8+15 points of damage, Will DC 22 half [harmless]); multiple selective targets (up to 15 *arcane marked* creatures within 30 ft. of each other); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33. *Cost:* 107,750 gp, 6,620 XP.



Ember's talent for evading traps is useless against even the simplest psionic trap

PSIONIC TRAPS

It is sometimes said that the most clever and fiendish trap designs spring from troubled minds. Never is that statement more literally true than with psionic traps, where the power behind the trap comes directly from the trapbuilder's mental energy. If you are using the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* (EPH) in your game, psionic traps are an excellent addition to any dungeon's defenses. While psionic traps are most common among races that give rise to many psions, such as dromites, githyanki, or xephs, any dungeon builder can hire a psionic trapmaker. The duergar, particularly, are known for their cunning use of psionic traps, which they use to protect many of their Underdark outposts.

One of the key advantages of psionic traps is their ability to deal damage that has no energy type, thwarting creatures that rely on energy resistance or immunity. A high percentage of harmful psionic traps also require Will or Fortitude saving throws rather than Reflex saves, so rogues cannot use their evasion class feature to avoid the damage. This characteristic makes psionic traps especially effective against the very people most likely to attempt to disable them.

If you are using the "Psionics Is Different" variant rule (EPH 65), psionic traps can help to flesh out the campaign world. Rogues would have to be prepared to disarm magic traps and psionic traps at any time. In particular, an antimagic trap (page 132) can be devastating when paired with a psionic trap under this variant rule.

Basics of Psionic Traps

Just like magic traps, psionic traps can be found and disarmed by a PC who has the trapfinding class feature. The DC of a Search check to find a psionic trap before it goes off equals 26 + 1/2 the number of power points expended on the trap's power (including augmentation), rounded down. For example, if a 10th-level manifester spends 8 power points on an augmented 2nd-level power when building the trap, the Search DC is 30 (26 + [8/2]). Use the same formula to determine the DC for a Disable Device check to disarm a psionic trap. Thus, for any given psionic trap, the Search DC and the Disable Device DCs are equal.

Most psionic traps allow a saving throw, often a Will save, to avoid the effect. The DC of the save is equal to 10 + (power level × 1-1/2). Manifesters can increase a trap's

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DC through augmentation or metapsionics, though the cost of the trap will likewise increase.

Building a Psionic Trap

Constructing a psionic trap requires the Craft Universal Item feat and the ability to manifest all the psionic powers used in the trap (or to hire someone who can). The cost in raw materials and XP is based on the trap's cost, which in turn is based on its Challenge Rating.

Psionic traps can be built using the same basic procedure that is followed for building magic traps (*DMG* 74), except with regard to the CR modifier and the cost modifier. The base CR of a psionic trap is equal to 2 + 1/2 the number of power points expended on the trap's primary power (including augmentation and metapsionics), rounded down. The trap's primary power is the one on which the trapbuilder expended the most power points. For example, a trap that features the *ectoplasmic cocoon* power (normally 5 power points) that has been augmented by 4 extra power points has a total point expenditure of 9, so the trap's CR is 6 (2 + [9/2]), rounded down.

Similarly, the cost for a psionic trap is based on the number of power points expended, as summarized in Table 6–8, below. If the trap uses more than one psionic power (and most do, because a power is required to serve as the trigger), the trapbuilder must pay for each power included. The costs also assume that the builder manifests all needed powers personally. If he cannot, the trap's cost is increased by the amount needed to hire a psion to manifest the powers.

Constructing a psionic trap takes one day per 500 gp of its cost.

Table 6–8: Cost Modifiers for Psionic Traps

Feature	Cost
Synesthete power used in trigger	—
One-Shot Trap	
Each power used in trap	+25 gp × number of power points × (number of power points + 2), +2 XP × number of power points + (number of power points + 2)
XP components	+ Total of XP components × 5 gp
Automatic Reset Trap	
Each power used in trap	+250 gp × number of power points × (number of power points + 2), +20 XP × number of power points + (number of power points + 2)
XP components	+ Total of XP components × 500 gp

Triggers

Psionic traps can have any of the same triggers as magic traps—proximity, sound, touch, or visual—but they use powers instead of spells to achieve the same effect. Due to the differences between the psion power list and the sorcerer/wizard spell list, some trigger types have different costs, depending on the level of the power used in the trap. As a result, a psionic trap is much more likely than a magic trap to use a visual or audio trigger, and much less likely to use a proximity trigger.

Trigger Type	Spell	Psionic Power
Proximity	*Alarm*	*Touchsight*
By alignment	*Detect good/evil*	*Aura sight*
Sound	*Clairaudience*	*Synesthete*
Touch	*Alarm*	*Synesthete*
Visual	*Arcane eye*	*Synesthete*
Fixed location	*Clairvoyance*	*Clairvoyant sense*
Illusion-proof	*True seeing*	*True seeing, psionic*

In addition, psionic traps have a few options for triggers that are not available (or not in widespread use) for magic traps.

Hostility: Certain psionic traps can be set to spring when they sense a creature that has hostile intent to a specific other creature. The *detect hostile intent* power (*EPH* 91) is required in their construction. When the trap is finished, the trapbuilder names one creature—usually himself, unless he is creating the trap for someone else. Any other creature that moves to within 30 feet of the trap and that has specific hostile intent toward the named creature activates the trap. The builder can also set the trap to detect hostile intent toward a race, so that it activates if it senses someone with hostility toward all elves, for example. These traps are notoriously fickle, however, because they fail to register creatures that are generally vigilant or that are unaware of who or what they will encounter. Trapbuilders who prefer to err on the side of safety most commonly use hostility triggers.

Psionics: If a trap uses a power that affects only psionic creatures, it is often built using a trigger that can sense the presence of psionics. Many traps include a psionic trigger and a visual trigger, so that the trap activates only if it sees a creature that registers as having psionic power. A psionic trigger has a detection range of 60 feet and requires the use of *detect psionics* (*EPH* 91) in the trap's construction.

Thought: A psionic trap can be set to detect the presence of thoughts by incorporating the *read thoughts* power (*EPH* 128) into the trigger. The trap activates if a thinking creature comes within 60 feet of the trap (or less, if desired), though a successful Will save from the creature prevents the activation. Any effect, such as *mind blank*, that prevents *read thoughts* from working also keeps the trap from activating. Thought triggers work well with traps that use mind-affecting powers, because such a trap will not activate for creatures that have good Will saving throws.

SAMPLE PSIONIC TRAPS

Unless an area is noted, each sample psionic trap below affects one creature when activated. A trap described as dealing "mind-affecting damage" actually deals damage that has no energy type, but is the result of a mind-affecting power. Thus, creatures that have immunity to mind-affecting spells, powers, or abilities take no damage from the trap.

Mind Thrust Trap: CR 2; psionic; visual trigger (*synesthete*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*mind thrust*, 1st-level psion, 1d10 points of mind-affecting damage, Will DC 11 negates); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26. *Cost:* 750 gp, 60 XP.

Destiny Dissonance Trap (Extended): CR 3; psionic; touch trigger (*synesthete*); automatic reset; psionic effect (extended *destiny dissonance*, 3rd-level psion, sickened for 6 rounds, no save); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27. *Cost:* 3,750 gp, 180 XP.

Crisis of Breath Trap: CR 4; psionic; visual trigger (*synesthete*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*crisis of breath*, 5th-level psion, unable to breathe except as a standard action, Will DC 14 negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. *Cost:* 8,750 gp, 700 XP.

Ego Whip Trap (Augmented): CR 5; psionic; visual trigger (*synesthete*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*ego whip*, 7th-level psion, augmented by 4 power points, 2d4 points of Cha damage [Will DC 15 half], dazed for 1 round [Will DC 15 negates]); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 15,750 gp, 1,260 XP.

Psychic Vampire Trap: CR 5; psionic; touch and psionic trigger (*detect psionics*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*psychic vampire*, 7th-level psion, drains 14 power points or deals 2 points of Wis damage to creatures that have no power points, Fortitude DC 16 negates); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 16,500 gp, 1,320 XP.

Baleful Teleport Trap: CR 6; psionic; proximity trigger (*touchsight*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*baleful teleport*, 9th-level psion, 9d6 points of damage, Fortitude DC 17 half); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost:* 33,500 gp, 2,680 XP.

Psychic Crush Trap: CR 6; psionic; thought trigger (*read thoughts*, DC 13); automatic reset; psionic effect (*psychic crush*, 9th-level psion, target drops to –1 hit points, Will DC 16 (made at +4) partial (target takes 3d6 points of mind-affecting damage); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Cost:* 28,500 gp, 2,280 XP.

Death Urge Trap (Augmented): CR 7; psionic; hostility trigger (*detect hostile intent*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*death urge*, 11th-level psion, augmented by 4 power points, target seeks to end its own life for 2 rounds, Will DC 18 negates); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost:* 39,500 gp, 3,160 XP.

Decerebrate Trap: CR 8; psionic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*decerebrate*, 13th-level psion, target loses all mental functions and dies in 1d4 days, Fortitude DC 20 negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. *Cost:* 73,500 gp, 5,880 XP.

Mindwipe Trap (Augmented): CR 9; psionic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*mindwipe*, 13th-level psion, augmented by 6 power points, bestows three negative levels, Fortitude DC 18 negates); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33. *Cost:* 73,500 gp, 5,880 XP.

Mind Thrust Trap (Augmented): CR 11; psionic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*mind thrust*, 19th-level psion, augmented by 18 power points, 19d10 points of mind-affecting damage, Will DC 20 negates); Search DC 35; Disable Device DC 35. *Cost:* 124,500 gp, 9,960 XP.

Energy Burst Trap (Augmented): CR 12; psionic; visual trigger (*true seeing*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*energy burst*, 20th-level psion, augmented by 15 power points, 20d6+20 points of cold damage, Fortitude DC 20 half); multiple targets (40-ft.-radius burst); Search DC 36; Disable Device DC 36. *Cost:* 134,750 gp, 10,780 XP.

HAZARDS

Dungeon hazards are difficult to define. They are not traps; hazards are often living and rarely intentionally placed. Nor are they creatures; hazards usually have no means of locomotion and no ability scores to speak of. Basically, a hazard is anything in a dungeon that can cause adventurers active harm and that does not fit into another category.

Certain obstacles in a dungeon that cause injury are not hazards, though. A cliff is not a hazard, even if it deals 20d6 points of damage to PCs who fall off it. Neither is a pool

COMPLEX PSIONIC TRAP: TELEPORT DIVERSION TRAP

This clever trap is designed to thwart high-level adventurers who use *teleport* to return to town to rest or sell their loot. The trap uses the *divert teleport* power as its trigger and effect, activating whenever it senses an attempt to *teleport* from anywhere within a radius of 230 feet. The trap diverts the final destination of the *teleport* attempt to a special sealed room that has been prepared with a variety of death traps or nonliving dungeon guardians, such as golems or undead. The room has no exits, and it often contains a second teleport diversion trap that covers the entire room, redirecting any attempt to *teleport* out right back into the same room.

The trap is particularly harmful to adventurers who need to *teleport* out of the dungeon to rest, because it triggers a deadly encounter right when the intruders are most vulnerable. Dungeon builders often place a teleport diversion trap in the same room as their most powerful monster, knowing that if invaders manage to defeat the creature, they will likely need to retreat to lick their wounds afterward.

The trap's Challenge Rating takes into account only the trap itself, not additional traps or monsters encountered in the sealed room.

Teleport Diversion Trap: CR 8; psionic; proximity trigger (*divert teleport*); automatic reset; psionic effect (*divert teleport*, 13th-level psion, redirects teleportation effect, Will DC 20 negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. *Cost:* 48,750 gp, 3,900 XP.

of water, despite the fact that a PC could drown in it. To be considered a hazard, a deadly condition must be able to affect a character without his knowledge or consent. Both a cliff and a pool are passive; a PC can stand in front of them all day and not be in any danger. But if a PC stands in front of a patch of brown mold, he will take damage.

NEW HAZARDS

Gray Slime (CR 3): Called "drip slime" by miners and sewer workers, gray slime is a hazard to those who wander under it. Although it can grow on any surface, gray slime is most dangerous when it is found on a ceiling. When exposed to any sort of light, gray slime sweats a potent acid that immediately begins to drip. Anyone who walks underneath a patch of gray slime that is in the radius of a light source takes 4d6 points of acid damage per round. This acid continues to burn, dealing 2d6 points of acid damage on the second round and 1d6 points of acid damage on the third. The acid can be washed off easily with any liquid. Natural sunlight and the bright light created by *daylight* destroy a patch of gray slime, but cause it to release a torrent of acid that deals 8d6 points of acid damage; the acid continues to burn, dealing 4d6 points of acid damage on the second round and 2d6 on the third. Electricity damage causes a patch of gray slime to go dormant for 1 round per point of damage dealt.

In most dungeon environments, this slime is notoriously difficult to notice. A PC who makes a successful DC 20 Spot check picks out an odd, wet discoloration on the ceiling. Miners and other workers who frequently deal with gray slime post signs near the area. They also lay guide ropes on the floor to give those without darkvision an easy way to move past the hazard safely.

Rot Grub (CR 4): There are few hazards that experienced dungeoneers fear more than a rot grub. Resembling a large maggot with a maw full of tiny teeth, the Diminutive rot grub thrives on flesh, both living and dead. Anyone about to enter a square containing a rot grub can attempt a DC 20 Spot check to notice the hazard. Those who fail the check or choose to ignore the grub risk exposure. Each round, the grub makes a single touch attack (at a +5 bonus) against one living target in its square. If it succeeds, it hungrily burrows into the target's flesh. An infested creature takes 1d6 points of damage per round for each rot grub that is infesting it. A successful DC 16 Fortitude save halves this damage. After 2d4 rounds, the sated rot grubs crawl away. A rot grub infestation can be removed with a successful DC 20 Heal check, though this check (whether successful or not) deals 1d6 points of damage to the infested target. Alternatively, a rot grub infestation can be destroyed by *remove disease* (PH 271) or any other effect that halts or counters a disease. Such spells destroy all the rot grubs inhabiting a target.

Medium or larger creatures that die from rot grub infestation spawn a new rot grub swarm within 2d4 days. Burning or otherwise destroying the body prevents this. Casting *raise dead* (PH 268) to restore a creature killed by a rot grub swarm does not destroy the rot grubs inside, but casting *remove disease* or a similar spell in the next round removes the grubs normally. *Resurrection* (PH 272) and *true resurrection* (PH 296) destroy the rot grubs when cast.

Rot grubs are physically frail (AC 13), and any damage dealt to one kills it. An unsuccessful melee attack with a natural weapon allows the rot grub a chance to burrow into the target.

Rot grubs move slowly when not inside a body, covering only 5 feet per minute. Occasionally, rot grubs might be used as part of a trap, making them impossible to spot until the trap is sprung.

Bone Fungus (CR 5): Piles of bones and skeletons that are left to rot sometimes develop a bulbous, ivory-colored fungus that is indistinguishable from the bone. When disturbed, the fungus releases a 10-foot-radius cloud of spores. These spores act like an inhaled poison (1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex, Fort DC 14 negates) as they settle into the bones of the victim. If a creature takes Dexterity damage from bone fungus, his bones turn brittle, and he takes extra damage from critical hits by a bludgeoning weapon. Add 1 to the damage multiplier of all bludgeoning weapons used against a creature suffering from bone fungus. Creatures without bones have immunity to this insidious fungus.

Occasionally, adventurers encounter animated skeletons that are covered in bone fungus. A 10-foot-radius cloud of bone fungus spores perpetually surrounds these skeletons. Reduce their Dexterity by 4 and increase their Challenge Rating by 2.

Bone fungus is destroyed if any amount of cold damage is dealt to the entire patch (which is typically 5 feet by 5 feet). Electricity and fire damage cause bone fungus to burn away, but the patch releases a cloud of spores in the process. Bone fungus has immunity to acid damage and sonic damage.

Anchor Mists (CR 8): This violet vapor hangs low to the ground, usually filling an entire dungeon level with its wispy haze. The mist is harmless except to those who attempt to enter or leave the current plane of existence. Anyone standing within anchor mists is affected as if by a *dimensional anchor* spell (PH 221). If a creature attempts to enter or leave the area of the mists by any form of planar travel—such as *ethereal jaunt*, *teleport*, or *rope trick*—he immediately takes 10d6 points of damage (Fortitude DC 23 half), and the attempt fails. If the effect lasts for multiple rounds, as with a *blink* spell, the creature takes damage every turn that he remains within the mists. Creatures cannot access extradimensional spaces while standing in anchor mists, and thus cannot remove items from a *bag of holding*.

Anchor mists are unaffected by winds, holding their place in midair even in gales as strong as hurricanes, but they can be dispersed with bottled air (see page 35).

CHAPTER SEVEN

DUNGEON FEATURES

Illus. by R. Horsley

Once you have set the theme, drawn the map, and carefully placed monsters, treasure, and traps, it is time to add the distinctive features of your dungeon, such as strange terrain, and finishing touches—small details such as furniture, fixtures, and even sounds and smells.

First, consider what sorts of unusual terrain you want to place, and where. You have probably done some of this work already when setting up climactic encounters, such as a mighty fiend in the midst of a lake of lava. But the area surrounding that encounter might well have been warped by fiendish influence; not only might walls and floors of magma signal its presence, but also weird and unsettling features such as a wall of insects or an animated flesh portal.

Then, add the "dungeon dressing" by determining the relevant details and furnishings of rooms. Not every chamber needs contents, and those that have them need not be filled to the seams, but a furnished room should have enough detail to make sense when the player characters investigate.

CREATING DUNGEON TERRAIN

Chapter 1 introduced players to some of the unusual sorts of terrain that might exist in a dungeon. Those features were far from an exhaustive list, however, and do not reveal all the possible challenges such bizarre features can present to the PCs. This section describes creating such terrain in more detail, and provides important information such as hardness, hit points, and Climb and break DCs. You'll also find some suggestions for adding nasty surprises to already weird terrain, and ways to increase the challenge for higher-level parties.

In most cases, dungeon features can easily be scaled up or down to accommodate the party level and special abilities of the PCs. Increasing or decreasing the damage dealt and the DCs of saving throws are simple ways to alter the difficulty without changing the concept. For DMs with the time and inclination to add more fiendish enhancements, each section suggests interesting variants. In addition, you can add general features to a given type of terrain.

Many of the weird materials described here can have their effects suppressed by *dispel magic* unless otherwise noted. Typically the suppressed effect returns after 1d4 rounds. Some kinds of materials and structures suggest a minimum caster level for the purpose of dispel checks; feel free to increase or decrease these numbers to adjust the challenge as befits the party's level.

WALLS

The wall types presented in Chapter 1 provide basic information for the players, so they have some idea of what their characters face when confronted by such terrain. This section contains details for interacting with these kinds of walls and tips on how to make them more interesting—and deadly.

In addition to the walls described here, you can use some of the wall spells in the *Spell Compendium* supplement as inspiration. Imagine how a party would react to a clattering *wall of gears* (SC 233) or a swirling *wall of sand* (SC 234) effect.

Table 7–1: Walls and Wall Variants

Wall Type	Typical Thickness	Break DC	Hardness	Hit Points[1]	Climb DC
Air	1 ft.	10[2]	—	—	—
Bone	3 ft.	25	5	180	15
Fire	1 ft.	—	—	—	—
Flesh	1 ft.	30	2	60	20
Glass	1/2 ft.	18	1	24	—
Ice	3 ft.	40	8	60	35
Insects	1 ft.	15[2]	0	36	—
Magma	3 ft.	20[2]	—	—	—
Ooze	3 ft.	20[2]	0	108	—
Souls	1 ft.	—	—	—	—
Water	5 ft.	Special[3]	—	—	—
Webs[4]	3 ft.	20[2]	0	72	20

Wall Variant[5]	Typical Thickness	Break DC	Hardness	Hit Points[1]	Climb DC
Disguised	—	—	—	—	—
Hardened	—	+5	+5	+50%	—
Invisible	—	—	—	—	+5
Slick	—	—	—	—	+10
Spiked	—	—	—	—	–5
Weakened	—	–10	–50%	–50%	–5

1 Per 10-foot-by-10-foot section.

2 These walls cannot be broken. The given DC is for the Strength check or skill check required to push through the wall. This DC increases by 2 for every 50% increase in thickness over the base.

3 Requires a Swim check as through calm water.

4 Increase hardness to 5 and Climb DC by 5 for calcified webs.

5 These modifiers can be applied to any of the other wall types unless otherwise noted.

Walls of Air

The Strength check to cross a wall of air starts at DC 10 but is higher for thicker walls, as set out in Table 7–1.

For more deadly variants of air walls, you can include higher-level spell effects (such as *cloudkill* or *acid fog*) or more virulent poisons within their swirling bounds. For a truly unexpected effect against high-level characters, try a wall made of confined dragon's breath. You can readily adjust the difficulty of the challenge by choosing the dragon's kind and age category. Alternatively, treat the wall as a bound air elemental that produces its whirlwind effect (*MM* 95) when creatures attempt to pass through.

Walls of Bone

Against higher-level parties, making a bone wall more challenging is a simple matter of increasing the effective Hit Dice for the purpose of turning or destroying the wall. You can also increase the wall's grapple bonus and grappling damage as appropriate.

These unnerving walls can have other magical effects upon them. Some spells are relatively benign but increase the sense of spookiness such a wall evokes; examples include lurid *continual flame* spells or skulls filled with chattering teeth (imposing a –2 penalty on Listen checks). Deadlier bone walls can deliver touch-range necromancy spells, such as *touch of fatigue* or *vampiric touch*. Treat the caster level of such spells as the minimum required (just as for potions or scrolls) unless you want to make the effect more dangerous.

Walls of bone are not affected by *dispel magic*.

Walls of Fire

The walls of fire described in Chapter 1 are intrinsically magical effects that are only suppressed by *dispel magic*. Permanent *wall of fire* spells are also possible (*PH* 298), as are permanent freezing vapors equivalent to the effect of the gap in a *wall of ice* spell (*PH* 299). Decide on a suitable caster level when placing the wall.

Walls of Flesh

As with walls of bone, you can easily make a flesh wall more challenging by increasing the wall's attack bonus and bite damage, or giving it tentacles or fleshy pseudopods that grapple those who get too close.

Walls of flesh that contain mouths might have spells such as *alarm* or *magic mouth* to alert the dungeon's keeper. Those with eyes could use *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *arcane eye*, *prying eyes*, and the like to convey information about intruders, or even launch nasty ray effects such as those of a beholder.

Walls of flesh are not affected by *dispel magic*.

Walls of Glass

A wall that encloses a pocket of dangerous gas has fewer hit points than a solid wall. Treat it as having half the wall's thickness and reduce its hit points accordingly. Instead of poison or acid, such a pocket might instead enclose a gaseous being, such as an invisible stalker that reports to its master after attacking the party, or a layer of anchor mists (see page 140) to thwart teleportation.

Walls of glass are not affected by *dispel magic*.

Walls of Ice

As described on page 28 of the *Frostburn* supplement, ice walls can be magically reinforced. Such magical treatment doubles the wall's hardness and hit points, and increases the break DC by up to 30 and the Climb DC by up to 20. A treated wall has immunity to cold and fire and gains a saving throw bonus against spell effects equal to 2-1/2 times the creator's caster level. Such formidable barriers should defend only very important areas.

Mundane walls of ice can be created only in cold environments and cannot be dispelled, but they can be melted. A permanent *wall of ice* effect can be created in warmer environments, but it is susceptible to *dispel magic*.

Walls of Insects

Instead of vermin, this sort of wall could be created out of other sorts of swarms. The various *Monster Manual* books and other monster supplements contain a variety of strange creatures, such as a bloodmote cloud (*Libris Mortis* 88) or a cranium rat swarm (*Fiend Folio* 167).

Walls of Magma

A wall of magma that has partially cooled becomes harder to push through. You can simulate this by adding a thin layer of stone (with the appropriate hardness and hit points) that must be cracked to allow passage, or by increasing the DC of the Strength check without a corresponding increase in thickness.

Walls of Ooze

The "generic" walls of ooze described in Chapter 1 have a standardized effect, but you can easily spice them up by treating them as magically held oozes of specific types. For example, gelatinous cubes constrained into flat, thick sheets would still have all their special abilities, paralyzing and suffocating any who try to pass through. (Their near invisibility makes such walls double as vicious traps.) Again, the monster supplement books are filled with different sorts of oozes with a variety of unsettling effects.

You can also create walls of slimes and molds, such as those described on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or the gray slime detailed on page 140 of this book.

Walls of Souls

To challenge higher-level parties, increase the Wisdom damage dealt and/or the number of negative levels bestowed by the wall, or raise the save DCs. A wall of souls also presents an interesting adventure hook: Perhaps defeating the dungeon's creator can release the tormented spirits to the afterlife. Alternatively, the freed souls, maddened by their former imprisonment, might become a new threat.

Illus. by C. Frank

Tordek falls to the wrath of the lich lord

Walls of Water

For a greater challenge, the wall could contain flowing water, increasing the Swim checks accordingly (*DMG* 92). A strong flow could sweep a character away or force her against the floor, perhaps dealing nonlethal damage as well (*DMG* 304).

As with a wall of air, you could create a wall that consists of a bound elder water elemental that uses its vortex effect (*MM* 101) against creatures that attempt to cross.

Walls of Webs

Walls of webs are not affected by *dispel magic*. As a variant, you could place walls of permanent *web* spells. Such walls regrow 10 minutes after being cut through but are vulnerable to fire (see the spell description, PH 301, for more information).

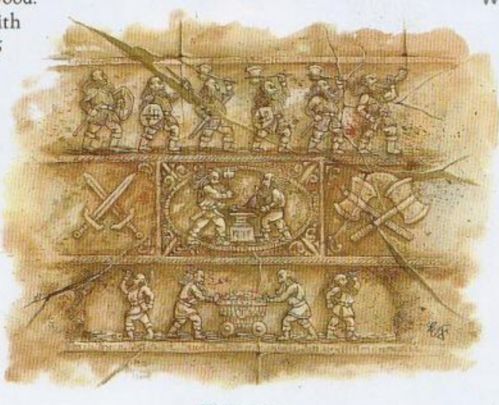
Variant Wall Construction

Variants on the standard forms of walls add interest to what might otherwise be plain surfaces. Magically treated walls and walls with arrow slits are described on page 59 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Five new variants are presented here. You can apply multiple variants simultaneously—for example, a wall could be both invisible and spiked. Certain variant qualities, such as weakened and hardened, cannot affect the same wall, for obvious reasons.

You can also add some of these variants to walls of unusual materials, although usually they are difficult enough challenges without such enhancement.

Disguised: Some walls are disguised to look like they are made of another material to hide their true nature from casual observation. For example, a wall of magma might be disguised as one of thin wood. Interacting physically with this illusion allows a DC 15 Will save to see through the glamer.

Hardened: Essentially a masterwork wall, the hardened variant represents expert handiwork and superior building materials. Its hardness increases by 5 and its hit points by 50%. Although such a wall looks nearly identical to a normal wall of its kind, a successful DC 20 Craft check (of a type appropriate to the wall's predominant material) identifies it as hardened. A hardened wall's break DC is 5 higher than normal.



Wall carving

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

Invisible: Providing an unexpected barrier to the charging barbarian and enthusiastic scout, an invisible wall is intended to taunt intruders or trap them in a dead end. Climbing an invisible wall is challenging (add 5 to the DC of the Climb check) since it has no visible handholds or cracks. A successful *dispel magic* or similar effect (minimum CL 9th) causes the wall to become visible for 1d4 minutes.

Slick: Carefully polished to remove handholds and fill in cracks, a slick wall is difficult to scale. Add 5 to the DC of a Climb check made to scale a slick wall.

Spiked: A spiked wall is studded with sharp points, usually made from the same material as the wall, or from iron if the wall material is soft or weak. Spikes can also be created from special materials such as adamantine. A spiked wall is easier to climb, owing to its numerous hand- and footholds. Spikes cannot be added to walls that have no Climb DC, nor to walls made from materials that are not solid.

A creature that is pushed against a spiked wall takes 1d6 points of piercing damage for every 5 feet it would have otherwise moved (maximum 5d6). For example, if the result of a bull rush attempt would push a creature 10 feet, but the creature was adjacent to a spiked wall, it takes 2d6 points of damage. Wall spikes can also be poisoned, dealing extra damage to those who come into contact with them.

Weakened: Age and neglect can weaken the structure of a wall, adding cracks and small breaches that make it easier to climb and significantly less sturdy. Such an enhancement is rarely created intentionally but models the effects of decay or of hasty construction. Weakened walls have reduced hardness, fewer hit points, and lower break and Climb check DCs.

Wall Ornamentation

Aside from its construction and material, a wall's ornamentation says a lot about the builders and inhabitants of the dungeon. Even crude dungeons and those built for utility have simple decoration, sometimes added by later inhabitants or those passing through. Walls built with care by dedicated craftsfolk might be covered with delicate and vibrant ornamentation, their creators spending nearly as much time on such fine details as they do on the structure itself.

Carvings: From simple symbols to complex battle scenes, wall carvings are some of the most common forms of ornamentation. Dwarves are famed for such detail, adding reliefs of their heroes and monarchs, or scenes from famous battles, to their subterranean homes and fortresses.

Carvings are also common in tombs, depicting the deceased as they were in life or paying homage to the deities that preside over the dead. Sometimes wall carvings convey information, such as long string of prayers running along the halls, or a list of names, cataloging inhabitants of the dungeon, rulers of the land, or other important individuals. Others are merely ornamental, depicting landscapes or creatures both mundane and bizarre, or are intended to warn off intruders with frightening images.

Effects: Carvings on a wall might change its characteristics. Those that cover less than one-quarter of a wall's surface have no effect. Those that cover up to one-half of a wall's surface obscure the fine details that give away the presence of a secret door or trap (increase the DCs of Search checks by 2). Carvings that cover more than half of a wall's surface make fine details difficult to locate (increase the DCs of Search checks by 4) but also make the wall easier to scale (decrease the DCs of Climb checks by 2). These modifiers should be doubled if the carving is in high relief or is particularly extravagant.

Paintings: A simple way to add decor to a wall is to color it with chalk, paint, or dye. Crude drawings are typical of less civilized beings, and graffiti might mar the halls of the once-powerful. Refined scenes accent the domains of wealthy occupants, the work of skilled or famed artists. Wall paintings can range from simple words to elaborate compositions. Many of the themes suggested for carvings above work as paintings too. A painting might also present a map of the surrounding territory, the next part of the dungeon, or a feature on some other level. It can provide direction or warning symbols that are readily understood by dungeon dwellers. Sometimes wall paintings depict lifelike *trompe-l'oeil* representations of doors, passages, or pits. A successful DC 15 Spot check reveals their true nature.

Effects: Sometimes wall paintings contain information that is vital to the explorers of a dungeon, but the ravages of time can obscure their meaning or make them unreadable. A successful DC 20 Decipher Script check (or a DC 15 Intelligence check) allows the reader to discern the nature of faded or damaged images. If the message is in a language the PCs do not understand, such wear adds 5 or more to the DCs of their Decipher Script checks to comprehend its meaning. Failing a Decipher Script check might result in an incorrect conclusion (see *PH* 71).

Wall Hangings: Paintings, tapestries, and other works of art might be attached to the wall rather than being part of it. Such items are removable and could serve as treasure, although hauling a luxurious drapery about can present some problems.

FLOORS

Floors can be created from the same sorts of unusual materials as walls, as described in Chapter 1. Many of the same sorts of modifications apply to them as well. The following entries supplement the ideas given for walls.

Floors of Air

Since a floor of air is magically supported, the hazards presented by incorporating harmful substances or dangerous creatures don't apply. Instead of a hard, stonelike surface, the floor could be yielding. Such a "puffy" floor might resemble snow-covered ground (*DMG* 94) or bog (*DMG* 88).

Floors of Fire

A floor of fire (or some other elemental effect) is best suited against high-level PCs, and might be a feature of an area inhabited by beings immune to that energy type. Like a floor of air, such a floor could have a clinging or yielding surface that impedes movement (and consequently deals more damage).

Floors of Flesh

A flesh floor could undulate with muscular movement, making trip checks each round against characters walking on it. Characters that fall prone are subject to bite attacks from maws, as described on page 21. You can adjust the attack bonuses, trip checks, and damage as appropriate for the party's level.

Floors of Glass

A glass floor might shatter (as a wall of glass) if subjected to significant impacts, such as that of a falling-object trap. The spray of glass shards increases the damage dealt by the basic trap effect, and might also release enclosed substances or creatures.

Floors of Ooze

A very thick layer of ooze over a solid floor acts like deep bog (*DMG* 88). Characters wading through the slime are also subject to its specific abilities, if you use a particular kind of ooze.

Floors of Water

A floor could be made of moving water, acting something like a conveyor (see page 150). Perhaps aquatic dungeon dwellers use it to get around, or the water carries the unwary toward waiting traps or predators. A water floor might have standing waves that impede movement (treat as difficult terrain) or force Balance checks to move across.

Variant Floor Construction

Floors, like walls, can have additional qualities worked into them. These have the same game effects as the equivalent wall variants.

Disguised: A disguised floor might look like solid rock but really be a patch of disgusting ooze. Disguised floors follow the same rules as disguised walls.

Invisible: An invisible floor might fool intruders into believing they face a gaping chasm instead of a main hallway. Invisible floors work the same way as invisible walls, except that moving across them involves no penalty (although looking into the depths below might be unnerving).

Slick: A slick floor is waxed or highly polished and makes going a little more difficult, requiring Balance checks to move at more than half normal speed. Treat a floor that has been polished for ornamental purposes as lightly slippery (increase the DCs of Balance checks by 2). One that has been oiled up to hinder intruders is severely slippery (increase the DCs of Balance checks by 5). A floor might also be deliberately oiled (as though with the *grease* spell, PH 237), though this measure is unlikely in well-traveled areas.

Weakened: Old or shoddily built floors might be spalled by cracks and small breaches that make them harder to navigate. Treat a weakened floor as difficult terrain.

DOORS

Doors can be created from unusual materials, as described in Chapter 1. Many of the same sorts of modifications apply to them as well. The following entries supplement the ideas given for walls. Doors also lend themselves to different variants from those used on walls or floors.

Table 7–2: Doors and Door Variants

Door Type	Typical Thickness	Hardness	Hit Points	Stuck DC	Locked DC
Bone	3 in.	5	15	15	17
Energy	1 in.	—	—	—	—
Flesh (membrane)	1 in.	2	5	15	20
Flesh (valve)	6 in.	2	30	20	25
Ice	4 in.	10	20	20	20
Glass	2 in.	1	8	14	16
Golem	6 in.	0	120	35	35
Plant	6 in.	5	30	16	18
Void	1 in.	—	—	—	—
Water lock	2 in.	10	120	26	26
Zombie	6 in.	5	30	20	22

Door Variant	Typical Thickness	Hardness	Hit Points	Stuck DC	Locked DC
Disguised	—	—	—	—	—
Hardened	—	+5	+50%	+5	+5
Invisible	—	—	—	—	+10[1]
Spiked	—	—	—	—	—

[1] DC normal if revealed or attempting character can see invisibility.

Bone Doors

A bone door's skulls can incorporate loud *alarm* spells or radiate fear effects, based on appropriate necromancy spells.

Flesh Doors

A membrane-style door can be created to respond to a particular kind of sound. You might allow a PC to determine a likely frequency range with a difficult (DC 25 or higher, depending on the party level) Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check, or a high-DC Perform check could trigger the appropriate vibration.

Golem Doors

The golem door described on page 25 resembles an iron golem, but a creative dungeon builder could craft it to resemble other kinds of golems, typically clay or stone, or a strange variant such as a brain or demonflesh golem (*Fiend Folio* 85–87).

Plant Doors

A plant door could form a tight passage through which characters can attempt to squeeze if they are unable to open the portal in the proper way. Much like a fleshy valve door (see page 25), pushing through requires a successful Strength or Escape Artist check as though against a stuck door. Increase the DC of this check by 5 for the woody and resilient nature of the tangled plant material.

Void Doors

Some versions of void doors deal 1d8 points of damage to creatures passing through (Will DC 10 negates; undead are immune). The most powerful bestow a negative level (duration 1 hour, Will DC 20 negates), much like the effect of an *enervation* spell.

Water Lock Doors

Decide how much water the door holds back when you design the dungeon; this determines how long the forceful flow should last. A single water-filled room might flow for only a round, while a passage connected to an underground lake could continue to flow for days.

Zombie Doors

The grabbing limbs of a zombie door can bestow various necromantic effects, much like those of a bone wall (see page 21).

Variant Door Construction

As with walls, doors can have any number of variants, modifying existing types and adding new features. Most of the modifications available for walls can be made to doors, having the same effects unless noted otherwise below.

Hardened: Like a hardened wall, a hardened door gains increased hardness and hit points (see Table 7–2). The tougher material of the door and its frame, hinges, and other components increase the door's break DCs by 5.

Invisible: Invisible doors can be tricky to open, owing to the difficulty of finding their moving parts. If unlocked, opening an invisible door is a standard action rather than a move action. Any mechanisms built into an invisible door are also invisible. Search checks to find a trap on an invisible door take a –20 penalty, while Disable Device or Open Lock checks take a –10 penalty. Any effect that allows a character to see an invisible door negates these penalties, as does the Tactile Trapsmith feat (*Complete Adventurer* 112). A successful *dispel magic* check (minimum CL 9th) causes the door to become visible for 1d4 minutes.

Variant Locks

Doors have a feature not shared by walls and floors: They can be locked. Depending on its quality, a lock usually has a higher Open Lock DC than the door's break DC when locked, but stealthy entry demands a lockpicking expert. Amazing-quality locks and traps can slow down the party's rogue, but adding a puzzle or a riddle lock makes the job into more than just getting a high check result.

Puzzle Lock: The door's standard lock is replaced by a complex puzzle, such as a maze carved into the door, particular shapes that require special keystones, or levers that must be manipulated in a certain pattern. A door with a puzzle lock does not have an Open Lock check DC—ordinary methods just don't work on it. Such locks often include hints or clues to their solutions. As with dungeon puzzles in general, such obstacles challenge the players as well as their characters. It's a good idea to hand out an illustration or diagram to help the players visualize the problem.

Riddle Lock: Doors bearing a riddle lock open only with the proper password. Such a door typically includes a *magic mouth* spell that asks a difficult riddle, to which the password is the answer. Speaking the password magically triggers to lock to open. A riddle could also be carved into or written on the door. As with puzzle locks, a door with a riddle lock does not have an Open Lock check DC. A successful *dispel magic* check (minimum CL 9th) suppresses the lock's magical effect but does not allow the door to be opened.

Solving the riddle usually requires the PCs to have a deep understanding of the door's creator or to spend a good deal of time on research: looking through a dungeon library, interviewing those who might know something about the creator's motivation, or finding clues. See the Constructing Conundrums sidebar for more advice about using characters' abilities to help players solve problems.

CONSTRUCTING CONUNDRUMS

Making riddles and puzzles can be more difficult than other parts of dungeon design, since you have to come up with something that intellectually challenges the players as well as the characters. Thus, a riddle or puzzle is really a sort of metagame activity, and you can use player knowledge to your advantage in the design process.

For puzzles, try adapting a game or other real-world analog that your players are at least somewhat familiar with. Games that exist in both the campaign world and the real world are best for maintaining verisimilitude. For instance, the PCs might find a door engraved with runes, one in the highest position on the door, and inset with slots into which five flat tiles can fit. They also find a rack of tiles. Each tile is engraved with a specific number of pips and a single runic symbol. Some of the symbols match each other, and all of them can be found on the door. The players might quickly discern that they need to make the best poker hand they can with the tiles, favoring the rune set highest on the door. Or perhaps a door contains three spaces outlined in a metallic frame, and the PCs find cards from a *Three-Dragon Ante* deck elsewhere. The players should be able to figure out that they need to create the highest-value flight of matching metallic dragons using those cards.

Riddles allow you to use players' familiarity with the D&D game as well as real-world knowledge. Consider the following riddle: "Cut me one time, my two claws can still rend. Cut me two times, the first cut is gone. Cut me three times, my fangs can still bite. Cut me four times, the first three don't tarry. Cut me five times, only burning will do." The players can figure out that it refers to a troll, even if the PCs have never encountered such a creature.

If the players can't figure out the riddle, the PCs themselves might provide help or a solution, so remember the characters' expertise when designing your conundrums. Allow PC skills and abilities to matter at least in some way. Perhaps successes on specific checks, such as Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge, allow the players to gain clues about the solution. Maybe unorthodox use of a particular spell can deceive the puzzle, or a successful Disable Device check can damage its mechanism enough to allow the party to move on. The DCs of such checks should be quite high, though, or you risk having the players just make rolls to bypass all your clever puzzles.

One way or another, the PCs must eventually be able to move on. A situation that allows only one way to progress can potentially stall your game. Don't force the players to continue working on a puzzle they found entertaining for a while but now just frustrates them. Come up with a way to drop a hint or give the party a little nudge in-game, one that's satisfying but allows the adventure to continue. For example, you could point out that the elf notices a secret door (which was intended to be opened by solving the puzzle). Then the party can just focus on getting the door open somehow, up to and including kicking it in.

You shouldn't be dismayed if a clever player comes up with the solution even though her PC is dim-witted. From a roleplaying perspective, the whole group's efforts could represent an erudite PC's superior acumen. On the other hand, even the dullest person has a moment of insight once in a while.

REALITY CONSIDERATIONS

When designing and placing puzzles and riddles, keep in mind your players' style of game and the style a puzzle or riddle suggests. If you are not overly concerned with realism, so that the game and the dungeon are merely ways of providing challenges to entertain the players, then any sort of conundrum is fine. But if you wish to inject some realism, consider the mindset of the dungeon's creator. Sane people who build for security don't allow the possibility of a breach by placing riddles and puzzles that might allow a bright or lucky intruder easy access to their holdings. Such wacky toys are more suited to maniacs or intellectually conceited creatures, but one wrong guess against their creations usually leads to swift death or other serious consequences. In a story-centered game, conundrums might exist as tests to allow a certain type of person to win through otherwise impossible obstacles. For example, a tomb housing artifacts intended for use by good heroes might have challenges visible to (and thus soluble by) only good creatures without magical aid. Certainly, any clues to the solutions would be inaccessible to those with evil intent.

BRIDGES

As described in Chapter 1, bridges can be formed of exotic materials or simply conjured. Table 7–3: New Bridge Types provides hardness and hit point information for the purpose of breaking such spans. Certain kinds of materials (especially bone and web) are likely to cause a general collapse if parts of the bridge are destroyed. See the specific entries on pages 26–27 for more information.

Like walls, bridges could also be modified as shown in Table 7–3.

TABLE 7–3: NEW BRIDGE TYPES

Bridge Type	Typical Thickness	Hardness	Hit Points
Bone	2 ft.	5	120
Conjured	1 in.	—	—
Force	—	—	—
Ice	3 ft.	5	180
Log	6 ft.	5	360
Swinging	1 in.	0	2
Web[1]	4 ft.	0	96

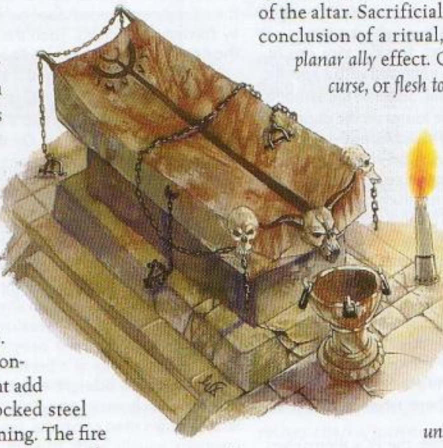
Bridge Variant	Typical Thickness	Hardness	Hit Points[2]
Disguised	—	—	—
Hardened	—	+5	+50%
Invisible	—	—	—
Slick	—	—	—
Weakened	—	–50%	–50%

1 Increase hardness to 5 for calcified webs.
2 Per 5-foot-by-5-foot section.

CHUTES AND CHIMNEYS

The following entries provide additional information for increasing challenges from chutes and chimneys described in Chapter 1.

Fire Chimney: A chimney with an active fire always means an occupied and active area, and quite probably hostile creatures are in the room containing the fire. Builders who are especially concerned about intruders might add further obstacles, such as locked steel grates across the hearth opening. The fire might house (or be) a guardian elemental.



Altar

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Flesh Chute: A living chute of flesh can deal crushing and possibly acid damage to those within it. A good model is the gullet of a purple worm (*MM* 211); a PC with a light piercing or slashing weapon can attempt to cut through, using the same AC as for the monster. Truly immense chutes might deal considerably more damage. Some gullet chutes move "passengers" along through muscular contractions. Treat these as bull rush attempts: Each round, a character within must succeed on the opposed Strength check or be pushed along at twice the normal speed, taking additional crushing damage. Again, the Strength and size modifiers for a purple worm are a good starting place.

OTHER DUNGEON FEATURES

Chapter 1 describes some of the typical architectural or natural features that can be found in a dungeon. Less common features are discussed here.

ALTARS

Built to honor a deity, a powerful outsider, or even a cruel tyrant, an altar serves as the center of a ritual, be it a prayer, offering, or sacrifice. The degree of an altar's adornment and frequency of its use says a lot about the dungeon's inhabitants. One that is dusty and unused signifies a lack of faith or abandonment, while one festooned with offerings implies fervent belief and an active community. Altars can be interesting backdrops for combat, harbor traps for defilers, or open up further exploration opportunities.

Altars typically grant boons to followers in their presence, from simple morale bonuses on saves or attack rolls to spell effects such as *haste* or *heroism*. These effects can be granted through *hallow* or *unhallow* and contingent spells, or they can be magical or supernatural properties of the altar. Sacrificial altars might call outsiders at the conclusion of a ritual, producing a *summon monster* or *planar ally* effect. Others might produce *slow*, *bestow curse*, or *flesh to stone* effects on those who would defile them. The whole area containing the altar might be a magical location.

Worship: The most common form of altar honors a specific deity or a host of gods. Every detail is intended to offer proper respect to the deity, from the material used to the carved symbols and kinds of offerings. A divine altar is usually the anchor of a *hallow* or *unhallow* spell. Powerful clergy might create an altar as a magic item that confers bonuses or special abilities on any faithful cleric who touches it. Such altars often include finely carved statues and other adornments. Living sacrifice is frequent in the worship of evil deities. Because most victims are unwilling, such altars usually include binding implements to keep sacrifices immobile. (Those of especially fanatical faiths might not need restraints.)

Homage: When a great hero or leader passes away, her remains or a significant piece of her equipment might come to rest in an altar paying homage to her greatness. Visitors to such reliquaries pay their respects to the departed rather than perform rituals. Sometimes an altar protects a hero's gear to be used in the fight against evil or even summons the hero herself at a moment of great peril. Mighty villains too might have such altars dedicated to them by their followers.

Offering: In some cases, an altar is built to placate a powerful creature. For example, lizardfolk might make offerings on a stone plinth to a red dragon that lives nearby. This type of altar is commonly found at the boundary between two separate areas of influence (such as at the mouth of a dragon's cave). Making offerings does not guarantee the benevolence of the honored creature, though. These altars are usually worn and relatively plain, with remnants of past offerings scattered about. Those dedicated to evil beings are often stained with the blood of sacrifices.

ELEVATORS

An elevator is a stable platform that moves vertically from one level of the dungeon to another. The intricacies or oddities of such a system can add tension to a chase, escape, or race to the surface. Security elevators allow you to seal off areas of the dungeon until the PCs are ready to explore them. When placing an elevator, consider the following variables.

Destination: In it simplest form, an elevator travels between two levels of a dungeon, usually from one room to another. More complex elevators might make multiple stops or skip secret or secure levels.

Capacity: A typical elevator holds four Medium creatures, although eight could squeeze in. Bigger lifts might hold entire groups of characters, along with their carts and gear. Smaller elevators might hold only one creature. An elevator's capacity might instead be limited by weight, so that it falls if the maximum is exceeded. If the mechanism is in poor condition, considerably less weight might trigger a drop.

Operation: In most cases, ropes and chains control an elevator's movement, combined with pulleys or gears. Mechanical elevators require physical effort, such as cranking a wheel, pulling a chain, or pumping a piston. The rider can usually activate the mechanism from the elevator platform, but in some cases, one PC must stay behind to operate the lift until his compatriots have finished their ride. Old, damaged, or strangely designed mechanisms might require successful Strength checks (DC 10 or higher) to operate, with each success moving the elevator a set distance.

Some elevators might use a trained flying creature to lift the platform or a powerful beast to turn a crank, or employ magic such as *levitate* or *telekinesis*. Such elevators require only understanding to operate. Magical controls might require experimenting with a control panel or learning a command word. Beasts might need a Handle Animal check or simple prodding before they begin work.

Security: Since elevators control access to otherwise unreachable areas of a dungeon, some builders include security features, such as traps and locks. Even an elevator lifted by a beast might not move without the proper command word. An elevator might require a key, such as a magical disc or stone that must be slid into place.

LADDERS

Ladders are common devices for moving vertically than elevators, and do not offer the same level of complexity or security as elevators. A ladder usually consists of a pair of wooden or iron posts or rails with a number of rungs spaced evenly along their length.

A ladder is built for a certain size category of creature. A PC of the same size category can climb a well-built ladder with a DC 0 Climb check. The DC of this check increases by 5 for each step of difference between the size category of the ladder's builder and its climber.

A ladder offers numerous chances to slow a falling character's descent in the event of a failed Climb check. With a successful DC 20 Reflex save, the character grabs hold of a rung before hitting the bottom but takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the jarring stop.

Ladders with parallel posts allow characters to slide down them at 60 feet per round. Doing so is a move action that requires a DC 5 Balance check per round of travel. Failure results in a fall, though the falling character can still try to grab a rung, as described above.

A few variant types of ladders are described below.

Calcified Spider Webs: These webs are strong, rigid, and provide ample holds for feet and hands to grip. They are slightly less easy to climb than an ordinary ladder.

Carved Runes: This "ladder" is nothing more than a set of large runes deeply engraved from floor to ceiling. Often, their function as a ladder is not obvious, and they might lead up a secret room or compartment.

Pole: Made from a single pole or tree trunk with alternating rungs on either side, a pole ladder is fairly easy to climb.

Ribcage: Foul necromancers might make ladders from the ribs and spines of their victims, or a ladder could be the natural skeleton of a gigantic snake. Such grim ladders are slightly more difficult to scale. As with a bone bridge (see page 26), if any section is reduced to below half its starting hit points, the entire ladder has a 50% chance of collapsing.

Rope or Vine Ladder: A common tool of many adventurers, a rope ladder is portable and easy to climb. Anyone adjacent to a rope ladder can attempt to shake others off as a standard action. Each creature on the ladder must immediately make a successful Climb check at a –5 penalty to hang on. Those on the ladder cannot attempt to shake others off in this way.

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TABLE 7–4: NEW LADDER TYPES

Ladder Type	Maximum Weight	Hardness	Hit Points	Break DC	Climb DC
Basic	800 lb.	5	15	18	0[1]
Calcified spider webs	500 lb.	2	8	18	5
Carved runes	—	—	—	—	10
Hanging chains or rings	1,000 lb.	10	20	27	10
Pole	600 lb.	5	15	18	5
Ribcage	500 lb.	5	10	15	5
Rope or vine	400 lb.	0	4	23	5

[1] Increase Climb DC by 5 for each size category of climber different from what the ladder was built to accommodate.

MACHINERY

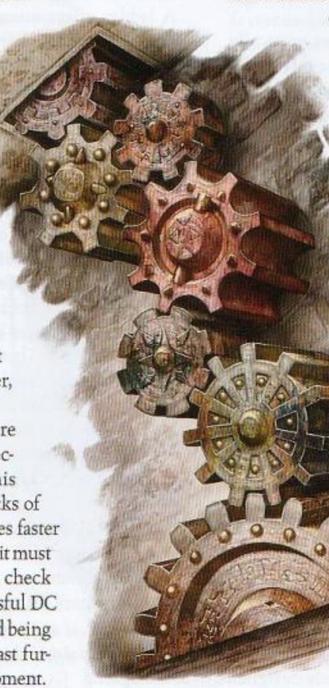
Pumping pistons, spinning gears, and slowly moving conveyors appear in dungeons used for industry, or form bizarre mechanical creations that exist for their own sake (such as in the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus). These moving contraptions can be dangerous to those caught within. Most such machinery can be jammed with a successful DC 20 Disable Device check, but doing so could have unintended consequences. Stopping a conveyor might only cause ore to pile up, but disabling a piston that pumps cool water into a boiler might trigger an explosion.

Conveyor: Made from a long piece of leather pulled by rollers, a conveyor is common in mines and other places that constantly transport materials from one place to another. It often ends at a pit, rock crusher, furnace, or chute.

A conveyor moves every creature on it a set distance in one direction at the end of each round. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity. If the conveyor moves faster than 30 feet per round, all those on it must make a successful DC 10 Balance check each round or fall prone. A successful DC 20 Reflex save allows a rider to avoid being moved into a hazard (such as a blast furnace) by jumping off at the last moment.

Severing the leather belt (hardness 2, 5 hit points) stops a conveyor.

Gears: Crafted from wood, metal, or stone, gears transfer motion from a source (such as slaves, a furnace, or a water wheel) to a piece of machinery (such as a mill, conveyor, or piston). In a massive machine, such gears are large enough to climb, with their motion assisting in the ascent. On a slow-moving gear, a successful DC 15 Climb check is necessary; for fast-moving gears, the check DC is 25 or higher, depending on speed.



Massive gears drive a dungeon's machinery

Climbing creatures risk being crushed where the teeth of two gears meet, although the DC of the Climb check does not change. Each round, the climber must make a successful DC 15 Reflex save or take 2d6 points of crushing damage (or more, depending on the size and speed of the machinery). Anyone caught in the gears must make a successful DC 15 Strength check to pull free or take the same amount of damage on the next round. Creatures pushed into interlocking gears (perhaps because of a bull rush or *telekinesis*) risk getting caught in the same way.

Jamming something (including a creature) into the gears disables them; such a task is a standard action that does not require a Disable Device check. The gears' motion stops until the object is removed or destroyed by crushing.

Pistons: Large pumping pipes and rods of iron, pistons are usually powered by steam from a boiler and move up and down regularly. Some are attached to gears and oscillate with them in time. A creature that moves into a piston's chamber takes 1d8 points of damage per round from its hammering; larger pistons might deal more damage. A successful DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage. Steam-powered pistons are also very hot, dealing an extra 1d6 points of fire damage per round.

Rails: A common sight in mines, a set of rails is a pair of continuous metal rods (or sometimes a single rod) laid along the ground to guide and support mine carts across a floor. These rails are usually set directly into a stone floor, but wooden ties are used where the floor is uneven or soft. Rails are a danger only to running creatures, which must make a successful DC 15 Balance check to avoid falling as they cross. A –10 penalty applies to this check in conditions of poor lighting.

Rock Crusher: Two titanic stone wheels positioned next to each other rotate toward the space between them, crushing large boulders into smaller, more manageable chunks. A creature that falls into a rock crusher takes 10d6 points of damage each round until it makes a successful DC 25 Climb check to drag itself out as a full-round action.

PEDESTALS

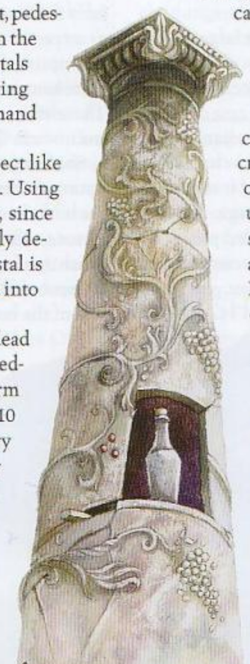
These raised stands display objects of all sorts, from a simple key to an ornate sarcophagus. Most pedestals are simple stone or wood, but others might be made of more exotic materials, some of which are described below. Those that hold important objects might be trapped with pressure-sensitive triggers or magic wards.

Force: Usually enclosing the displayed object, pedestals of force can be brought down only through the use of *disintegrate* or similar magic. Such pedestals often contain another, secret way of retrieving the object they guard, such as a key or command word to drop the force barrier temporarily.

Ice: A pedestal made of ice encases the object like a force pedestal but is much easier to breach. Using ice is a safety precaution for delicate items, since smashing or melting the pillar would likely destroy whatever is inside. Sometimes a pedestal is laced with an inhaled poison that is released into the air when the ice melts.

Animated: Be it a living tentacle, an undead arm, or an animated object, an animated pedestal shows off its item while keeping a firm grasp on it. Such pedestals have at least a +10 bonus on grapple checks against those who try to take their object. They can be harmed or destroyed by weapons or magic, depending on their material and creature type.

Magma: Fortified by magic, pedestals made from magma are extremely hot and display only nonflammable objects. These pedestals transfer their heat to the object: Anyone who tries to pick it up takes 2d6 points of fire damage per round of contact. After 1 minute away from the magma, this damage drops to 1d6 points per round. After 2 minutes, the object is cool to the touch and can be handled normally. For each point of cold damage dealt to the object, the length of time it is hot is reduced by 1 round.


Pillar compartment

Plant: Plant pedestals come in many varieties, from flowering vines to bulbous fungi. As long as they have a source of water (and, usually, light), these pedestals can maintain themselves for years. A plant pedestal's defense comes from its spores or scent. Intruders who approach within 10 feet of the pedestal must make a successful DC 15 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds. Another save must be made for each round the character remains within 10 feet. At the same time, the vines, leaves, or other tendrils of the pedestal wrap tightly around the object. Untangling the item and taking it from the pedestal is a standard action—something a nauseated character cannot do. A tougher pedestal might grip its prize so tightly that a successful grapple check is needed to release the item.

PILLARS

Pillars support the ceiling in large, underground chambers. While most are plain, utilitarian affairs, some pillars are ornately carved in the likeness of warriors, workers, or dancers, and others bear ancient script or complicated scenes around their surfaces. Some pillars occur naturally, where stalactites and stalagmites meet or a stream has bored a hole in a larger piece of soft stone. Pillars can be made of nearly any material and are similar to walls for the purpose of Climb checks and break DCs. They often contain other, hidden features, as described below.

Compartment: Ornate pillars often conceal compartments that are opened by a secret catch or with a key. A compartment can be of any size—extradimensional spaces are not unheard of. It might hide treasure or danger, such as inhaled poison or a guardian. Spotting a hidden compartment requires a successful DC 20 Search check; especially well-crafted compartments might be harder to find.

Hollow: Some pillars are hollow, hiding places for guards that emerge to attack intruders through cleverly hidden doors. Since such doors can be complex, entering or exiting a hollow pillar is a standard action. Recognizing a hollow pillar requires a successful DC 20 Spot or Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check.

Trap: Pillars can hide many common dungeon traps, such as swinging scythes, arrow traps, and magical glyphs. A grid of trapped pillars might form a maze without walls, springing traps against any who move in the wrong direction. Each pillar in a row might contain a trap that springs whenever anyone passes by, creating a brutal gantlet for anyone foolish enough to run through the chamber.

POOLS

Rivulets of water are common in dungeons, and pools collect on any uneven surface. Some dungeons contain larger reservoirs to collect water for use in cooking, drinking, or industry. Pools, fountains, and the like need not contain water, or the water might be augmented or contaminated in some way.

Fountain: Some large pools contain decorative fountains, or a fountain could be built around a spring or stream. Fountains can serve other purposes, such as concealing a trap, secret compartment, or hidden passageway. Some spray water at high force to push intruders out of a room, into a pit, or against a spiked wall. Treat this attack as a bull rush attempt (with a +8 Strength modifier). Especially dangerous fountains might be animated objects that activate to defend the chamber. Fountains might also confer a magical effect, as described below.

Foul: Water laced with a naturally occurring poison or tainted with disease is common in dungeon environments, where such toxins cannot be readily washed away. Ingested

Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

poisons are the most common kind, but nearly any disease can be found in water, as long as an infected creature regularly drank from it or died in it. The liquid might also be tainted by a supernatural influence, such as an evil aura from a nearby Abyssal portal.

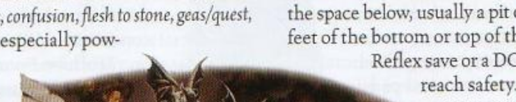
Inhabited: Aquatic creatures can inhabit large pools. A pool's inhabitants might be a supply of food for other creatures. Some pools, especially those that block passages, might contain guardian creatures—or, in the case of water elementals or oozes, themselves be such guardians.

Magic: Granting a boon or bestowing a curse upon any who drink from them, magic pools are usually intentional creations but can also occur randomly in a magic-infused area. Typical boons include *cure* spells, *neutralize poison*, *remove disease*, or even *wish*. In addition to *bestow curse*, curses might be *blindness/deafness*, *confusion*, *flesh to stone*, *geas/quest*, or *insanity*. A pool with an especially powerful boon might be the destination of pilgrimages, despite the other dangers of the dungeon.

STAIRS

Stairs are the most common way to travel between levels. As with ladders, stairs are usually built for one size category of creature. Anyone of that size category or within one step of it can use the stairs normally. Stairs made for a creature two or more size categories larger or smaller count as steep stairs (*DMG* 63), except that characters must spend 4 squares of movement to enter such a square.

Illus. by B. Hagan



Sliding stairs

Sometimes stairs can be rigged against intruders. The following stair variants work much like traps, in that they can be detected and disarmed. Decide on appropriate Search and Disable Device DCs for the party's overall power level.

Collapsing: Whether they are rotted with age or intentionally trapped, collapsing stairs are common in dungeons if inhabitants have no need for them because of a special ability, mode of movement, or alternate route. The stairs collapse when a certain amount of weight rests on the midpoint of the flight, dumping all creatures below, along with the stair debris. Such a collapse typically deals 2d6 points of damage in addition to any from the fall. Creatures adjacent to either end of the faulty section can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save or a DC 20 Tumble or Jump check to leap to safety. Collapsing stairs that are weakened by natural causes can be identified by inspection, requiring a successful DC 10 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check, and Disable Device cannot negate their effect. Those that are intentionally set to collapse must be detected and disarmed normally.

Insubstantial: These ghostly-looking stairs are solid only for those who bear the proper identification, such as a special tattoo, pendant, or other token. Anyone else attempting to use these stairs falls through them as if they were not present, often into some sort of pit trap below. These stairs are magically created and so can be dispelled (minimum CL 10th).

Shifting: When a specified amount of weight is placed upon a shifting staircase, it begins to withdraw into the wall. Each step becomes narrower until all form a vertical surface, a process that takes 1 round for every 30 feet of vertical distance. Any creatures that were on the stairs are dumped into the space below, usually a pit of some sort. Those within 10 feet of the bottom or top of the stairs can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save or a DC 15 Tumble or Jump check to reach safety. Alternatively, a creature can attempt to ride the retracting stairs and then grab hold of the newly revealed wall. This trick requires a DC 15 Balance check followed by a DC 20 Climb check. Failing either check dumps the character into the space below. A shifting stair trap can usually be disarmed with a key, a secret switch, or a command word.

Sliding: When the trap is triggered, all steps of this stair tilt to a 45-degree angle, forming a long slide (treat as a basic chute, as described on page 27). A pressure plate in one of the steps usually triggers the slide; this can be detected and disarmed normally. Dungeon inhabitants simply avoid the trapped step.

STATUES

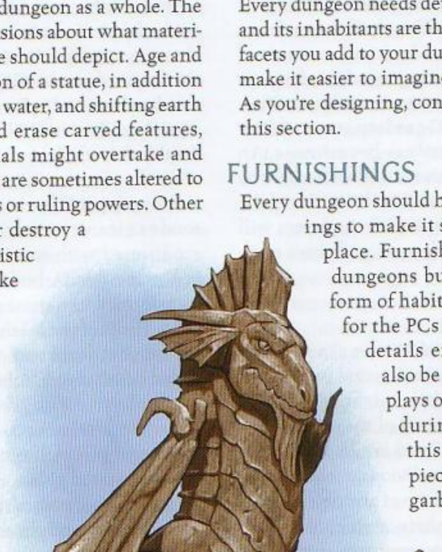
Very common in dungeons, statues exist as decorations, for devotion (usually as part of an altar; see page 148), or for practical purposes that might be hidden from the casual observer. Statues can be of just about any shape, size, material, and pose. They can convey messages, point out pathways, cover secret entrances, and conceal treasure. In fact, statues themselves can be treasure.

Statues depict subjects and actions important to their creators or, at least, important in the creator's culture. Sculpting a statue is a complex, lengthy, and expensive process, so only wealthy societies with many artists and much leisure time bother with statues that have merely a decorative function. Most dungeon statues are religious or celebratory icons, immortalizing famous figures, warrior ideals, principles of faith, or significant events. A rare few are representations of common beings, objects, or situations, and fewer still are abstract. The more important the depicted subject, the more lavish or large a statue is likely to be, incorporating exotic and valuable materials, as well as magic.

When designing a statue for your dungeon, consider its builder, age, and environment—all elements you should already have established for the dungeon as a whole. The nature of the builder guides decisions about what materials to use and what the sculpture should depict. Age and environment affect the condition of a statue, in addition to events over the years. Weather, water, and shifting earth can tumble it from its base and erase carved features, or colonies of plants and animals might overtake and degrade it over time. Old statues are sometimes altered to the specifications of new owners or ruling powers. Other sentient beings might deface or destroy a statue, whether from lack of artistic appreciation or to express dislike of the creator or its ideas.

You should also decide on a statue's purpose, if it has one beyond artistic expression. Its gaze might point the way to a secret chamber, forming a simple guide for those who serve the statue's owners. A weapon in its hand could turn to open a hidden compartment. It might be carefully placed and counterweighted to hammer into the floor when someone climbs onto its pedestal.

If you decide a statue contains or is treasure, one factor becomes important: Is the statue or its valuable portion portable? Treasure that can't be removed from the dungeon isn't a reward at all.



Dragon statue

TELEPORTERS

Teleportation devices, while rare, instantly circumvent obstacles and overcome distance. They might be constructed as quick means of escape, form parts of a nefarious trap, or be methods of confounding intruders. Some teleporters are recognizable, such as a circle of glowing runes or a portal that crackles with energy, but others are hidden or barely noticeable. The travel itself might not be immediately evident, and trips can be one-way. In fact, if the destination is built to resemble the departure point, the PCs might not notice that anything has changed, though a successful DC 25 Spot check reveals subtle differences in the two areas. If they do not recognize the fact that they have been teleported, the explorers learn only upon exiting the dungeon that they are nowhere near home, leading to further adventures during the journey back.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Every dungeon needs details. Although the environment and its inhabitants are the PCs' main concerns, the subtle facets you add to your dungeon add a level of realism that make it easier to imagine and more fun to interact with. As you're designing, consider all the details described in this section.

FURNISHINGS

Every dungeon should have minor features and furnishings to make it seem like a real and functional place. Furnishings are essential elements in dungeons built or currently used for some form of habitation, even if they are too alien for the PCs to recognize. Not only do such details enhance believability, they can also be important to how an encounter plays out or influence the PCs' options during exploration. Furnishings, in this context, consist of furniture, pieces of equipment, tools, supplies, garbage, debris, and anything else that isn't a permanent fixture of the dungeon.

When you're furnishing a dungeon, remember how its inhabitants think and live. The condition, quality, and nature of a room's contents depend on a number of factors, such as whether it is abandoned or currently in use, or whether its inhabitants are refined sensualists or bloodthirsty brutes.

Consider each room's function (see pages 84–91 for more about typical dungeon rooms). A kitchen could contain a table, counter, chairs, crockery, cutlery, cookware, rags, a stove or fire, spices, condiments, storage containers, cabinets, cleaning supplies, and food stores. An armory mighr feature stands holding armor, racks filled with weapons, polishing oils, whetstones, ammunition, and storage containers. Minor impediments, such as a kitchen's table and chairs, can change the battlefield, and having an idea of what is or could be in a room helps you and the PCs improvise; for example, in a kitchen, a disarmed fighter could grab a cleaver from a nearby cutting block.

Illus. by W. Maby

Also think about how you'd like planned encounters to work in the room. If you want the ogre butcher to charge the kitchen's doorway when the PCs enter, don't spoil your encounter by blocking his path with a table he can't jump over. On the other hand, if you don't want the PCs to charge a group of orc archers in a mess hall, then place an eating table or fire pit between them and the door. Have monsters use the terrain and furnishings in creative ways, such as jumping on a table to gain a +1 bonus on melee attack rolls against those on the floor or standing in a space that contains a pillar to gain its cover bonus.

As with all your design elements, use these features and techniques in a way that seems reasonable and fair. Usually, that's no problem—a PC can leap atop a table or fight from behind a pillar as easily as her enemies. An exceptionally clever opponent considers how he might be attacked and prepares for those eventualities. But if the terrain always favors their characters' foes, players will feel mistreated rather than challenged, and that's not a recipe for fun.

Strangeness

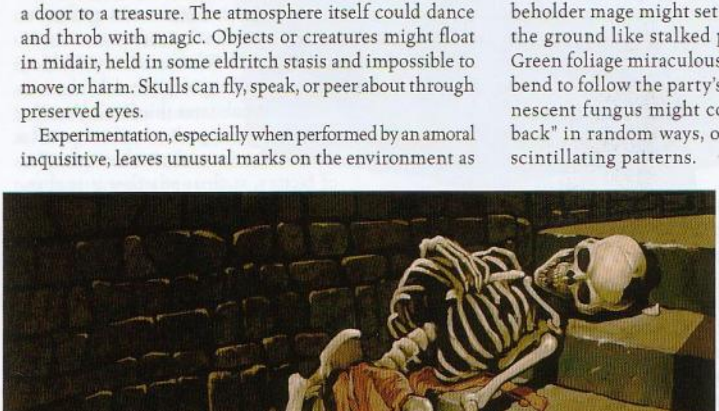
All sorts of strange objects and substances can make up dungeon furnishings. Your imagination and your intent are the only limits. Mystic symbols might decorate all surfaces, with the light or darkness of magical energy playing over them. Walls and floors could ripple like water when touched, despite their obviously solid nature. Illusions can change the appearance of any object, from a door to a treasure. The atmosphere itself could dance and throb with magic. Objects or creatures might float in midair, held in some eldritch stasis and impossible to move or harm. Skulls can fly, speak, or peer about through preserved eyes.

Experimentation, especially when performed by an amoral inquisitive, leaves unusual marks on the environment as well: The walls and floor of a laboratory show signs of errant explosions and sloppily used acid; the corpse of some unfortunate creature lies carefully dissected on an iron table; a beating heart floats above an arc of electricity emitted by a tiny pedestal. Clear jars and containers might contain all sorts of preserved reagents and study subjects.

Places haunted by inhuman monsters can feature horrors, such as blood stew bubbling away in a pot, revealing worse bits when stirred. Evil humanoids might collect the teeth of their victims, amassing them like coins or wearing them like strings of macabre pearls. Piles of bones reveal the disgusting and terrifying eating habits of the dungeon's inhabitants, or a display of freshly cleaned skulls exposes a grisly collector's hobby. Severed wings of a celestial displayed as a trophy demonstrate the black-hearted evil of a villain.

Such signs of death can be compelling, but nothing sends a clearer message than a corpse. Battle grounds are littered with recent or skeletal remains, telling a gruesome tale. A body embedded in the wall or half transformed into another creature bespeaks magic gone awry. Hints of the method of death might be found on a cadaver, but deeper mysteries could lie in what has been added or removed from the scene or the corpse itself. A pile of stone with hints of humanoid parts might be a shattered statue or the remains of a petrified victim, but if that pile still quivers and pieces move, it could be a devastated golem.

Life can be warped by the supernatural as well. A beholder mage might set the eyeballs of its enemies in the ground like stalked plants to watch for intruders. Green foliage miraculously existing in darkness could bend to follow the party's light as the PCs move. Luminescent fungus might collect sounds and "play them back" in random ways, or convert light or magic into scintillating patterns.



Even the dead can furnish a dungeon

Illus. by W. Maby

Use strangeness sparingly, like spice in a carefully prepared dish. Try to inject a sense of magic and wonder appropriate to a fantasy setting, but have a rationale for everything you add. Don't overwhelm the players or mislead them into thinking some object or scene is more important than it really is.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventures that connect your campaign can also contain leads to further heroic exploits. Adventure hooks that build on the direction of your campaign make your world seem more dynamic and alive. If adventures take place in a dungeon, then such hooks should form part of that dungeon.

Any item, creature, or locale can contain an adventure hook. A good hook is an intriguing piece of information or an observable phenomenon that opens the possibility to further undertakings by the PCs. However, such information shouldn't distract the party from the current adventure.

Making a hook compelling can be hard if you don't plot your campaign events far in advance. By planning ahead even a little, you can throw a few hints at future possibilities into the current adventure. Even in the simplest kick-in-the-door campaign, such extra potential adds to the fun. Whether the hook is a mysterious relic, a map marked in an unknown language, or a clear truth from a captured enemy who usually lies, it motivates the players to send their characters on additional quests. A good hook makes your design task easier: You don't have to invent reasons or drop broad hints to get the PCs to pursue desired missions, because the adventure hook makes their course seem natural and self-determined.

Good hooks strengthen a sense of player empowerment. Bad ones don't make sense in the context of the current adventure, or seem linear or forced. Not only do they injure suspension of disbelief, badly designed hooks can make the players feel like their choices matter little. If you can, try to use more than one hook pointing to the same quest so the PCs can choose among them.

At the same time, though, don't make a hook so compelling that the players or their characters cease caring about the adventure they're already on. The easiest way to do this is to make it hard to immediately decipher, but simple with the right tools or help—perhaps something acquired at the conclusion of the current quest. Understanding its significance might require physically assembling pieces scattered throughout the dungeon. A hook can simply be something the dungeon's major villain has or doesn't have. If the PCs fight the blackguard overlord only to find the relic he stole is still missing, they have a reason to keep looking. Of course, they need to find enough information to keep the search viable.

Don't litter your dungeon with red herrings: details that seem significant but in fact lead nowhere. Nothing makes players ignore important clues more effectively than confusing them with pointless distractions.

Sample Hooks

Here are several examples of interesting leads to side adventures.

Clerical Coercion: The corpse of a cleric still has identification papers and a journal that describes a secret and shocking mission, along with a request written by a high-ranking member of the clergy who still lives. According to this scribed appeal, anyone who returns the cleric's remains to the church will be rewarded. But when the PCs do so after leaving the dungeon, the church authorities think they know too much. Now the party must complete the fallen cleric's mission or make enemies of her powerful superiors.

Dead Directions: The PCs see the remains of a previous explorer lying at the bottom of an open pit. He broke his legs in the fall and could not save himself, but he left a map sketched on a wall. A piece of chalk is still clutched in his fleshless hand.

King's Pride: Jagged pieces of bronze scattered throughout the dungeon can be assembled into a disc engraved with words in a dead language. In its writing, a prideful king describes the grandeur and riches of a realm he created in a particular location. The place is known to the PCs, but no such kingdom now exists there.

Legendary Lens: Within the pages of an open tome are diagrams of a lens and instructions for its creation. Cryptically, the book describes how to use the lens to find the correct path through or to a legendary dungeon. The necessary equipment and materials aren't at hand, but the book specifies where to find them or how to make them.

Resurrection's Call: An ancient bone wrapped in cloth tugs slightly in an easterly direction. The bone comes from the body of a slain half-fiend lizardfolk leader whose bones were scattered across the land to prevent his return. Each bone pulls gently toward the others, trying to reassemble the skeleton. Should it be completed, the leader will rise again as an undead horror.

SENSES

As visual creatures, we rely on sight to tell us most of what we need to know. However, the D&D game is largely verbal, relying on the DM's description, players' imaginations, and characters' interaction with other elements to set the scene. Many of the design elements in this book are visual, making a scene easy to picture, but you can make your dungeons (and all your adventures) richer by considering other senses besides sight. You don't have to describe everything, but relating only important sensations sets your players on alert every time you do so. Try to strike a balance between that extreme and tedious detail.

Make sure to check for reasonable consistency in an area. If one chamber contains a roaring waterfall, remember that the rushing water might be heard in other rooms nearby. A kitchen full of rotting food might lend its stench to an entire wing of the dungeon. The grinding of machinery might make the neighboring chambers vibrate. A secret door might leave marks in the dust on the floor. These and other details help breathe life into the stale air of the dungeon.

Spot checks relate to sight and Listen checks to hearing, but the other senses require only that the object be nearby and that a character take the proper action. For example, a PC who touches a steel door can feel the icy chill of a magically cooled or water-filled room on the other side, and one who sniffs the air in a damp cavern can smell its moist earthiness. If smelling, tasting, or touching something specific carries important information, have the PC make a Wisdom check. Set a reasonable DC based on the sensation's strength. Knowledge or Appraise checks might be appropriate as well, depending on what the character is trying to find out.

Spot and Listen Checks

Calling for Listen and Spot checks at important junctures raises the players' alertness level even if their characters fail the checks, which telegraphs upcoming encounters. To address this problem, occasionally ask for Listen and Spot checks even when nothing important or noteworthy exists to be heard or seen. Doing so keeps the players guessing about what is a real danger. As well, be ready to describe the dungeon's sights and sounds even if the PCs fail important checks. Used carefully, this technique is a fantastic way to build mood and tension as the PCs move through the dungeon.

In a rich environment, the adventurers are likely to see something wherever they look and to hear something every time they prick their ears. Make a list of innocuous sights and background noises relevant to your dungeon, referring to the list whenever you call for unnecessary checks or respond to failed ones. For example, a dungeon built from a series of caves might echo with drips or the sounds of running water, and have stalactites, stalagmites, and layers of flowstone as common sights. You can key lists to certain areas with specific interesting features, or they can provide flavorful but meaningless details, such as the patter of rodent feet or pebbles clattering as they fall from the ceiling.

Hearing

Dungeons can be full of noise, from the roar of a waterfall to the hiss and bubble of flowing lava. Since Listen checks are frequent in the game, take sound into consideration when designing your dungeon. Where Listen checks are significant, set the DCs ahead of time, noting them on the dungeon map or in your encounter write-up for easy reference during play.

As you consider your dungeon, highlight rooms in which loud activities or operations take place. Determine background noises and local sounds, and try to figure out when and where the PCs might hear them. Imagine hearing the sounds out of context and what a reasonable person might conclude. Your locale takes on another level of authenticity when the PCs arrive in a fire giant's forge, filled with hammering and with pumping bellows, a while after having heard loud and repetitive ringing and a sound like the breathing of some great beast.

Remember that loud sounds drown out quieter noises. You can use circumstance modifiers to simulate this situation. For example, a PC standing near a waterfall (Listen DC –5) could take a penalty of –2 or more on Listen checks to hear a quieter sound, such as creatures talking in a cave behind the cataract.

Smell

Smells are often overlooked in dungeon design, and DMs usually mention odors only when they are strong or significant. But just as dungeons are noisy, so too are they full of scents.

As with sight and sound, think about the smells of your dungeon. Consider the quality of the air in general, and what effect the contents of specific areas have on the atmosphere. Also think about what odors the inhabitants might create or exude, even using these for effect just prior to an encounter. For example, if the sickly sweet smell of embalming reagents always indicates the presence of mummies, the players learn to react to that cue, thus becoming more immersed in your created environment. Harmless, inanimate corpses might also be treated with the same reagents, and the smell produces extra tension despite the lack of immediate danger. Again, though, take care not to misdirect the players too often with such techniques.

Just as loud noises drown out quieter sounds, a particularly strong smell masks weaker scents. Only creatures with the scent special quality can detect weaker odors that are masked by a stronger smell, and even they incur a penalty when doing so. Conversely, creatures that can smell become used to overpowering odors in an area, effectively unmasking subtler smells over time. These facts give you a way to disguise aromas you don't want to reveal, a reason to stop describing strong scents, and a method to reveal subtleties of your setting gradually.

Just as visual creatures don't need to make Spot checks in familiar surroundings, creatures that have scent don't need to make Wisdom checks to identify smells they know.

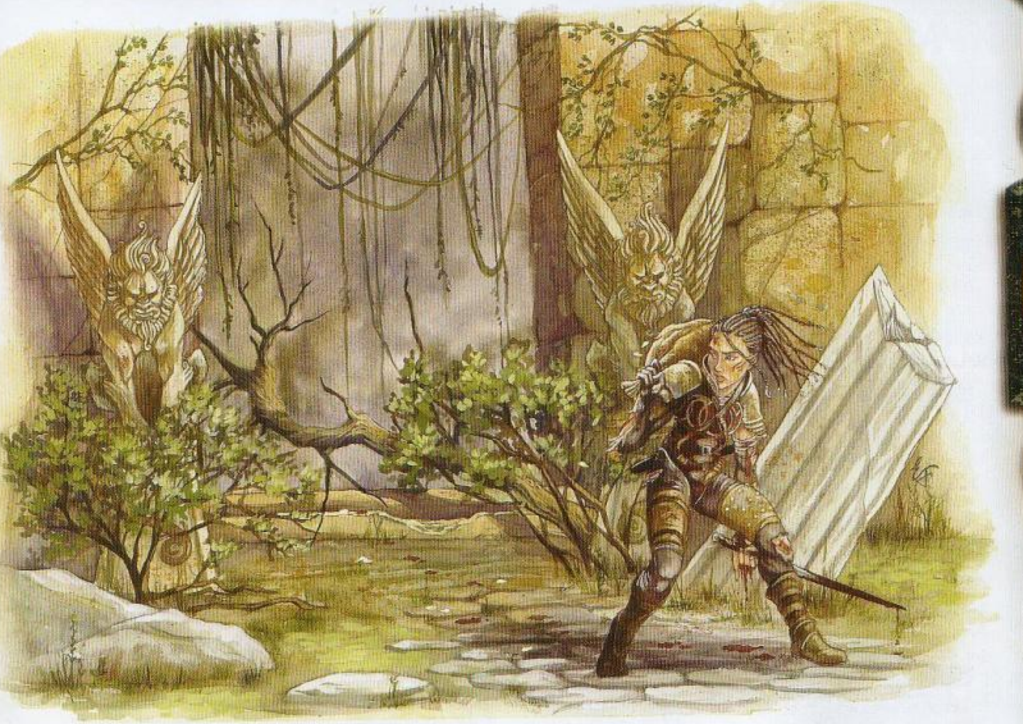
Taste

The act of tasting is usually a conscious decision. Sometimes an intrepid PC takes take a drink from a mysterious pool or bravely tries found foodstuffs. However, taste and smell are closely linked, and the act of breathing—or just having the mouth open for another reason—can invite tastes unbidden.

Think about the flavors of what the characters eat and drink, from potions to dried fish found in a crate of supplies. Consider what the mustiness of dust-laden tomb air might taste like to a hero forced to inhale it during a fight or flight. You could even contemplate the tang of a creature's skin as it grapples with an open-mouthed adventurer, especially if you intend to evoke horror or disgust in your players.

Touch

The tactile qualities of most objects are obvious to players once a visual description is given, but the sense of touch is still useful. As with other senses, include tactile descriptions when they're called for, especially temperature.



Illus. by E. Fiegenschuh

Lidda escapes the dungeon, laden with treasure but alone

Underground areas have a stable ambient temperature equal to the average of daily temperatures on the surface, unless they contain a significant source of heat or cold. In general, caves and other underground structures are cooler than the surface during hot months and warmer during cold months. Air flow, water movement, ice, and heat sources, such as lava, can all affect the ambient temperature. Use these details to set the tone you want, relating warmth or cold to significant features.

Surfaces, such as walls and doors, can transmit heat or cold and thus give a clue to what lies beyond. Metal conducts temperature best, followed by stone and then wood. A steel door to a chamber that contains a portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire should be hot to the touch, whereas the wooden door of a kitchen containing a cookfire might not feel different from any other.

Aside from temperature, you can describe the feel of surfaces and substances in your dungeon. Be ready to provide a sense of the weight and other tactile aspects of objects. Mention the coarseness of hewn rock walls or the glossy smoothness of a polished granite floor. Remark on the rippled, dry texture of the pages in an ancient tome or the silkiness of a rabbit-fur blanket—but only if adding such details make your dungeon more fun and interesting.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

After each adventure, look back over the session and determine what worked and what could have used more definition. Every trip into the dungeon is a learning experience for Dungeon Masters as well as for player characters. Was the level of detail sufficient, or did the rooms feel identical? Were the challenges too difficult or too routine? Were the traps nuisances or were they interesting parts of the environment? Analyzing your work enables you to revise the remaining parts of the dungeon for a more satisfying adventure next time.

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

JASON BULMAHN is the Managing Editor of *Dragon* magazine. His previous design credits include *Secrets of Xen'drik* for the EBERRON campaign setting.

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